

صباح الخير

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THE INDEPENDENT

Friday 6 March 1998 45p (IR 50p) No 3,551

Newspaper of the Year for photographs

Iraqi children are dying – you can save them

"IRAQ'S CHILDREN are going through hell," Robert Fisk notes today in his latest dispatch from Iraq. The Iraqi regime deserves no defenders. And yet, as Fisk's reports this week have made clear, it is the innocent who have suffered most.

Readers telephoned throughout the day yesterday, pledging support for *The Independent's* appeal to collect funds for sick children in Iraq.

Established agencies were supporting the United Nations made it clear that authorisation will follow quickly. Even the British government, which initially suggested that there would be several weeks of delay – said that permission could quickly be granted. Every application for export of medicines must be separately approved by three ministries: the Department of Health, the Foreign

Office, and the Department of Trade and Industry.

The Independent will remain involved with ensuring that the drugs get directly to those who most need them. The Red Cross and the Birmingham-based Islamic Relief are among those who have said they are ready to offer practical help in getting the vital drugs to the right place. Officials of the UN sanctions



committee said that authorisation for medicines of the kind which *The Independent* is planning to send could be issued "within two or three days".

Medicines may be exported to Iraq, but remain in desperately short supply. The drugs include vincristine and methotrexate, urgently needed for treating leukaemia. There has been an explosion in the number of leukaemia cases in Iraq, as reported

in Robert Fisk's harrowing reports. The cases appear to be connected with the bombardment of Iraq during the Gulf War, perhaps from fumes from burning oil refineries which contained carcinogens, or even from the bombing of Saddam Hussein's chemical warfare factories.

Many victims are Shia Muslims, the group which rebelled against Saddam in the south of Iraq in the wake

of the Gulf War of 1991. That is one reason why the Iraqi government has seemed determined to turn a blind eye to the tragedy. The deliveries of drugs would be with the assistance of international agencies, but would not be controlled by the Iraqi regime.

■ *The Independent Iraq Appeal*, PO Box 6870, 1 Canada Square, London E14 5BT.

Robert Fisk, page 18

Brown and Blair isolate Irvine

By Anthony Bevins and Colin Brown

LORD Irvine of Lairg, the beleaguered Lord Chancellor, has been left beaten and isolated after a behind-the-scenes battle over the future price and profit regulation of gas, electricity, water, and telecommunications industries.

The Independent has been told that Lord Irvine, who chairs the cabinet committee on future legislation, was standing out against an early Bill to reform regulation of the privatised utilities. But following an intervention by Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer – who does not sit on the committee – Lord Irvine was forced into retreat. Some ministers believe his defeat signals a "withdrawal of love" by Tony Blair.



Lord Irvine's retreat

Department of Trade and Industry had wanted the Regulatory Reform Bill to be included in the Queen's Speech programme for next autumn's session of parliament. But Lord Irvine astonished colleagues by saying that he did not see the Bill as a priority in political terms. His opponents argued that Margaret Beckett, the President of the Board of Trade, had set up an inter-departmental review last July, which was specifically welcomed by the Treasury in the Budget Red Book.

Mrs Beckett said then that 13 years after the Tories had put the first regulatory regime in place, it was time to take stock. She said the review would address concerns about profit levels, service quality, investment shortfalls, and the social implications of

some commercial decisions – particularly for low income and disadvantaged consumers.

The Whitehall review is due to report in the next few weeks – with public consultation due to be completed by the summer.

In cabinet committee wrangling, Lord Irvine is understood to have been told that any delay in legislation would create a loss of momentum and any scandal involving prices, profits, or "fat-cat" executive rewards would immediately be pinned on the Government.

But Lord Irvine obstinately dug in, and it was only after intervention by Mr Brown that he was over-ruled. A Whitehall insider told *The Independent* last night that the question had been "resolved" to the satisfaction of Lord Irvine's opponents.

That defeat in Cabinet committee comes hot on the heels of the row over the lavish decoration of his official quarters – and numerous disputes with other cabinet colleagues, including Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, and Donald Dewar, the Secretary of State for Scotland. This week's statement on legal aid was also seen as a retreat on earlier plans that provoked outrage in the legal profession.

The Lord Chancellor found himself in even more hot water yesterday, following claims that he misled a Commons committee over the secret talks being held between Labour ministers and Tory leaders on reform of the House of Lords.

Conservative members of the Commons Public Administration Committee accused Lord Irvine of misleading them after he gave the impression on Tuesday that no talks were taking place between the parties over Lords reform.

The Lord Chancellor dismissed the value of such talks in the past, saying: "A muckle lot of good it did them". But on Thursday night, Lord Cranborne, the Tory leader in the Lords, revealed that he had attended two confidential meetings with Lord Irvine and Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the Lords.

The Prime Minister's official spokesman last night dismissed the claims as a "Tory get-Irvine" campaign. "There is a world of difference between the sort of soundings that have been made and substantive talks," he said.

Lord Irvine could now face a demand to return to the committee for another grilling, if he fails to satisfy the chairman with his explanations.



A guardsman and a Sikh officer cadet facing the future yesterday Photograph: Tony Harris

Army tries trooping other colours

THE ARMY said yesterday that it was finally facing up to its responsibility to give equal treatment to ethnic recruits, even in its most elite regiments, writes Ian Burrell.

Tourists passing the Hyde Park headquarters of the Household Cavalry yesterday may have been surprised to see dozens of young black men from London and Birmingham and a band of Sikhs from Leicester drilling on the parade ground. The potential recruits were undergoing a four-day course to give them a taste of life in the Guards regiments.

For the military it was an opportunity to trumpet its commitment to equal opportunities and television cameras were summoned to film the top brass's promises to rid the ranks of the "stigma of racism".

Military chiefs fear high-profile discrimination cases brought by black soldiers, and damaging reports by race watchdogs, are a serious disincentive to potential ethnic recruits. So the Household Cavalry yesterday launched a new race-conscious recruitment video, *Changing of the Guard*, intended to make black recruits more at home.

Murdoch's 'Angel of Death' descends

By Steve Boggan and Andrew Buncombe

RUPERT Murdoch's American-based "Angel of Death" swooped on HarperCollins in London yesterday amid speculation that the media tycoon's retribution over the Chris Patten book affair was nigh.

Anthea Disney was locked in talks all day with the senior executives who Mr Murdoch said had left him in an "inescapable position" after dumping Mr Patten's book *East and West*,

which is critical of the Chinese regime. Ms Disney, chairwoman of News America publishing, parent company of HarperCollins, a woman often described by colleagues as a "corporate assassin", flew in from New York yesterday morning and immediately went into a meeting with Eddie Bell, chairman of HarperCollins, and other senior executives. Her arrival coincided with a decision by Mr Patten's lawyers to include Mr Murdoch personally in an action for breach of contract against HarperCollins.

The company refused to say why Ms Disney was in London but her presence fuelled speculation that sackings, resignations or mutual partings were imminent.

"She's not here to hand out lemons," said one HarperCollins source. Another said: "We're expecting the carpets to turn blood red. She's regarded here as something of an Angel of Death."

Ms Disney, a former British tabloid reporter, has a reputation for doing Mr Murdoch's more brutal bidding. Last year, she axed more than 100 American titles on the grounds that they were either late or no longer commercially viable.

"She only comes in once a year," said another HarperCollins insider. "And it's usually when there is a crisis of one form or another."

"The atmosphere is very jittery. People are very expectant and there is a widespread belief that a number of heads are going to have to roll."

Formula One to drop its links with tobacco

By Andrew Buncombe

FORMULA One could sever its ties with tobacco advertising within four years. Max Mosley, president of the FIA, motor racing's world governing body, took the sporting world by surprise by announcing that a ban could be in place by 2002 in advance of a European Directive deadline aimed at outlawing tobacco sponsorship.

The European Directive would have banned the £200m a year spent on the sport by tobacco companies by 2007 if proof were found that it caused people to start smoking. Yesterday, however, during preparations for the Grand Prix in Melbourne, Mr Mosley said the sport would act well in advance of the deadline if the link could be proved.

"The FIA has consistently said that, if presented with evidence of a direct link between tobacco advertising-sponsorship and smoking, it would act to eliminate tobacco advertising-sponsorship from Formula One," he said.

The news was music to the ears of the European Commission, which feared that a Europe-only ban would result in more Grand Prix being held on other continents, particularly Asia. A spokeswoman for social affairs commissioner Padraig Flynn, who has consistently campaigned against tobacco advertising, said: "We strongly welcome today's announcement. They have the power to make this a worldwide ban while we can only oppose it at EU level."

"We can furnish the FIA with any evidence or studies they want to show this link."

Tobacco manufacturers were less pleased. "We feel the FIA has bowed to political pressure," said John Carlisle, spokesman for the Tobacco Manufacturers' Association in London. "All the evidence points to advertising not being linked to people starting smoking."



Breathtaking rugby action captured by David Ashdown

'Independent' wins another top award

■ DAVID ASHDOWN, Chief Sports Photographer of *The Independent* and the *Independent on Sunday*, was last night named Sports Photographer of the Year.

■ The prize was announced at the Press Gazette British Press Awards dinner in London. Ashdown, who is currently in the West Indies for the England cricket tour, has been with *The Independent* since the newspaper's launch in 1986.

■ David Rose, also of *The Independent* and the *Independent on Sunday*, was commended in the Photographer of the Year category.

■ Last night's awards followed other recent *Independent* honours for photography, including the Newspaper of the Year prize in the British Picture Editor Awards.

9 ACADEMY AWARD NOMINATIONS

BEST PICTURE • BEST DIRECTOR
BEST ACTOR • BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR
BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS

"A VERY GOOD FILM - FUNNY, THOUGHTFUL AND BEAUTIFULLY PLAYED. 9 OSCAR NOMINATIONS AND IT DESERVES THEM ALL"

"THE BEST ACHIEVED FEEL-GOOD MOVIE IN SOME TIME. A FUNNY, SEXY AND HIGHLY EMOTIVE TALE."

ROBIN WILLIAMS • MATT DAMON
GOOD WILL HUNTING

STARTS TODAY AT CINEMAS NATIONWIDE



TOMORROW In the 5-section Independent

■ Spare us the
celebrity chef
THE MAGAZINE

■ Was that
windfall really
worth it?
YOUR MONEY

■ Costa Rica,
Corsica, beating
the ski crowds,
down time with
Phill Jupitus
TIME OFF

■ Paul McGann:
always
the
outsider
THEEYE



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Recycled paper made
up 41.4% of the raw
material for UK new
papers in the first half
of 1997.

Blair brings Adams in from the cold

By David McKittrick
Ireland Correspondent

TONY BLAIR yesterday announced that he is prepared to meet Gerry Adams next week, following the expiry of Sinn Féin's period of exclusion from the multi-party talks.

The Prime Minister's official spokesman said, however, that the meeting was not expected to take place before the second half of next week. This may create timetabling problems in that Mr Adams is due to fly out to the US on Wednesday for St Patrick's Day activities.

Sinn Féin was temporarily barred from the talks after the British and Irish governments concluded that the IRA had been involved in two Belfast killings. They will be allowed to re-enter on Monday next, but Sinn Féin sources have made it clear they do not intend to go back until after the prime ministerial meeting.

Mr Blair is also to see Social Democratic and Labour Party leader John Hume. Ulster Unionist MP Ken Maginnis yesterday described the decision to hold any meeting with Sinn Féin as foolish, while the Rev Ian Paisley, leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, accused the Prime Minister of acting in "obscene haste" and of "dancing to Gerry Adams' tune".

And efforts to move the peace process along continued yesterday with a telephone call between Mr Blair and Bertie Ahern, the Irish Prime Minister.

Meanwhile, politicians of all parties pondered the intriguing results of the largest opinion survey ever carried out in Ulster, which among other things produced strong evidence that nationalists may not insist on a united Ireland in the short term. The poll was carried out for BBC Northern Ireland television's respected political programme, *Hearts and Minds*.

Ninety per cent of SDLP supporters, and half of Sinn Féin supporters, said they would accept an outcome from the present talks which fell short of a united Ireland. This will be of keen interest to the Government in a process where success will depend on a willingness to compromise.

A less encouraging finding, however, was the opinion of no fewer than 82 per cent that violence from groups who are not on ceasefire, such as the INLA and LVE, "could derail the whole process". Another pessimistic finding was that 87 per cent thought the parties would not come to an agreed settlement by the target date of May.

A narrow majority of Unionists believed Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble should now talk directly to Sinn Féin. The poll indicated that nationalists have appreciably more confidence in Mr Hume and Mr Adams than Unionists have in Mr Trimble and Mr Paisley. The highest ratings went to Mr Hume and David Ervine, leader of the Progressive Unionist party.

A fourth man was arrested yesterday in connection with Tuesday night's killings of two men, a Protestant and a Catholic, in the Co Armagh village of Poyntzpass. Three others arrested on Wednesday were last night still in RUC custody.



St A family settling down to a picnic on the first day of Crufts yesterday, complete with pet (stuffed toy) dog. The four-day show, at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham, will see more than 20,000 dogs in competition and culminates in the prestigious Best in Show event on Sunday. Photograph: Brian Harris

Prescott digs in on sale of Tube

By Colin Brown
and Randeep Ramesh

JOHN Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister, has risked putting the Old back into Labour by guaranteeing London Underground will remain "publicly controlled and publicly accountable".

The pledge was in a letter to former Tory MP Hugh Dykes, an opponent of rail privatisation. The phrase echoes words used by Labour in opposition. The commitment was dropped from the election manifesto, despite being approved by the party's membership.

Mr Prescott has taken an increasingly hard line with the private sector, perceived to be lining directors' pockets while providing a poor service. This week has seen the Deputy Prime Minister weighing in for the taxpayer after the National Audit Office criticised the handling of the sale of British Rail's rolling stock. Sold in 1996 for £1.8bn, months later they were bought up for £2.65bn, netting directors millions. Mr Prescott said: "The rolling-stock companies have been getting fat at the taxpayers' expense. It is completely unacceptable."

He also put paid to plans by FirstBus to buy up Great Western. Again, former British Rail directors stood to make millions despite providing a service where almost one in five trains is "officially" late. FirstBus yesterday met the franchising director, John O'Brien, who has taken "guidance" from the Deputy Prime Minister. This means any change in ownership will require tough new punctuality targets, investment on new trains and lower fares.

Masons surrender over police scandals

By Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

THE leaders of England and Wales' Freemasons last night reluctantly surrendered the names of members of their secret society who are linked to a series of police scandals. The decision to provide the list followed an extraordinary dispute with a committee of MPs who threatened to find the masons in contempt of Parliament if they refused to co-operate.

The United Grand Lodge, which represents 340,000 Freemasons in England and Wales, is to write to the Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor, and Home Secretary, to express their anger and "concerns" at the affair. The brotherhood provided 17 names of fellow masons out of a list of 161 people, mostly police officers, connected to three scandals.

The affair comes at a time when Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, has proposed measures to set up registers of Freemasons working in the

criminal justice system. For months the Freemasons resisted requests from the Home Affairs Select Committee for the names of their members as part of an inquiry into whether the brotherhood was responsible in anyway for a number of notorious scandals.

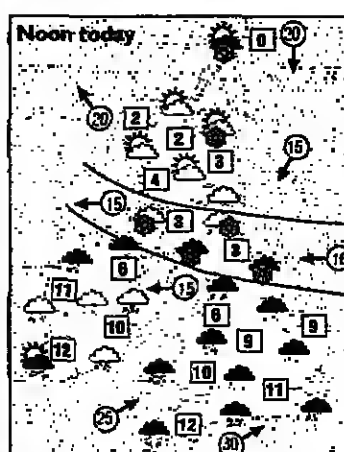
A formal order was issued by the Sergeant at Arms after the Lodge's Grand Secretary, Commander Michael Higham, refused to release the names at a bad-tempered hearing of the committee two weeks ago.

However the Freemasons yesterday provided a list of eight out of about 60 police officers, a small number of journalists, magistrates, judges and a barrister, connected to the IRA pub bombings investigation that led to the wrongful conviction of the Birmingham Six; seven names from 96 members of disbanded West Midlands Serious Crime Squad; and two out of seven officers connected to the John Stalker affair, in which the deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester was suspended

from his investigation into whether the RUC operated a shoot-to-kill policy.

In a letter to the Committee chairman, Labour MP Chris Mullin, Cmdr Higham said: "The Board is extremely uncomfortable about this compulsion and has been reluctant to provide the information, because in its view the Committee's inquiry is an invasion into the privacy of the men concerned, who have not consented to their names being disclosed."

WEATHER



Today's forecast
England, Wales and Northern Ireland will be cloudy with outbreaks of rain. Some of the rain will be heavy with a risk of local flooding in south-west England and Wales. Across northern England and Northern Ireland it will be cold enough for snow on higher ground at first, mostly turning to rain later. By contrast, the south will be mild with a heavy south-west wind. Meanwhile, northern Scotland will have sunny spells and the cold snow showers, but heavier sleet or snow will edge northwards into southern Scotland.

Outlook for the next few days
Scotland will stay cold with some sleet and snow showers and night frosts. Sunday and Monday will be dry with sunny spells but sleet or snow is likely to return on Tuesday. Windy weather may also affect the hills of northern England. Elsewhere it will turn colder but showers will be of rain, with sleet or snow on higher ground early next week. As that moves northwards, however, it may give a spell of sleet or snow over northern hills of England and Wales.

British Isles weather most recent available figures at noon local time

City	Cloud	Temp	Wind	Humid	Pres	Visib	Notes
London	100	10	10	80	1013	10	
Edinburgh	100	8	10	80	1013	10	
Belfast	100	10	10	80	1013	10	
Cardiff	100	10	10	80	1013	10	
Manchester	100	10	10	80	1013	10	
Birmingham	100	10	10	80	1013	10	
Sheffield	100	10	10	80	1013	10	
Nottingham	100	10	10	80	1013	10	
Leeds	100	10	10	80	1013	10	
Sheff	100	10	10	80	1013	10	
Cardiff	100	10	10	80	1013	10	
Belfast	100	10	10	80	1013	10	
London	100	10	10	80	1013	10	

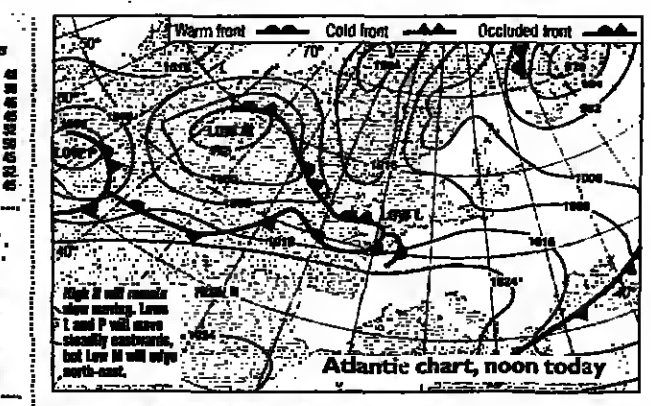
High tides

Location	AM	HT	PM	HT
London	07.15	5.20	03.3	6.3
Liverpool	04.57	5.17	30	7.7
Southampton	00.16	5.12	25	6.9
Hull (Admiral Dock)	12.17	5.4		
Belfast	05.42	11.29	3.0	
Cardiff	05.47	11.24	3.7	

Lighting times

Location	18.00	19.00	20.00	21.00
Belfast	17.55	18.00	18.05	18.10
Edinburgh	17.55	18.00	18.05	18.10
London	17.55	18.00	18.05	18.10
Manchester	17.55	18.00	18.05	18.10
Nottingham	17.55	18.00	18.05	18.10

Out and about with AA Roadwatch
Call 0336 401777 for the latest road and traffic news. Source: The AA Roadwatch. Calls charged at 50p per min at all times (ex VAT).



World weather most recent available figures at noon local time

City	Cloud	Temp	Wind	Humid	Pres	Visib	Notes
London	100	10	10	80	1013	10	
Edinburgh	100	8	10	80	1013	10	
Belfast	100	10	10	80	1013	10	
Cardiff	100	10	10	80	1013	10	
Manchester	100	10	10	80	1013	10	
Birmingham	100	10	10	80	1013	10	
Sheffield	100	10	10	80	1013	10	
Nottingham	100	10	10	80	1013	10	
Leeds	100	10	10	80	1013	10	
Sheff	100	10	10	80	1013	10	
Cardiff	100	10	10	80	1013	10	
Belfast	100	10	10	80	1013	10	
London	100	10	10	80	1013	10	

YES MEN, NO

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WILLIAM HARTSTON WEATHER WISE

I HAVE just met a formula that explains Europe's weather. Going by the name of Gorczynski's Continential Index, it says:

$K = 1.7(A/\sin\theta) - 20.4$
where A is the annual temperature range in degrees Celsius, and θ is the latitude angle of the location under consideration.

The idea of the formula is to obtain a precise measure of the difference in climate between places near the sea and those in the middle of a land mass. In general, places with a maritime climate will have a lower range of temperature (A) than landlocked locations. With the oceans releasing their stored

heat at a slower rate than the land, they provide a sort of thermal lagging for anywhere near the coast. Britain, for example, has a generally moderate climate because the sea is colder than the land in summer and warmer than the land in winter, thus cooling us down when it's hot, and warming us when it's cold.

So the value of K in the formula will be higher in places far from the sea where A takes a larger value. The "sin θ " term simply enables fair comparisons to be made between places on different latitudes. When all the values of K have been worked out, they are then

scaled to produce a range from zero at the most oceanic sites to 100 at extreme continental locations. Values of the scaled figures in Europe include 10 for London, 21 for Berlin and 42 for Moscow - which is a fair reflection of the bitter Russian winters.

Britain is parked in a particularly fine spot because it benefits also from the North Atlantic Drift (the extension of the Gulf Stream) by which the prevailing south-westerly winds bring warm water from Florida slowly in our direction (the water takes almost a year to complete the journey). So while our maritime climate brings us lower extremes of temperature,

the overall temperatures are higher than might be expected anyway.

Even taking all this into account, it is striking just how different climates can be at places at the same latitude. The north of Scotland, for example, enjoys January temperatures some 20C higher than the world average at the same latitude, while temperatures at certain locations in the south-east of Siberia - again at the same latitude - may be 45C lower than average.

It's not just how much sunshine a place receives - it's how well the oceans store and spread that energy that determines the climate.

0345 300111

A good man to know if you're broke

Did his loan to Moscow secure telecom deal?

By Phil Reeves in Moscow

MOSCOW WAS forced to go cap-in-hand to the American financier, George Soros, last year for a quickie loan.

Mr Soros gave the Russian government a one-week bridging loan of "several hundred million dollars" last June in order to help it pay some of its hefty debts in back wages.

Although the sum is trifling when compared with the country's \$150bn (£94bn) mostly long-term foreign-held debt (or even its more urgent \$60bn high-interest short-term rouble borrowings), the loan has raised eyebrows in Moscow's financial circles. It was granted only a month before Mr Soros put up nearly \$1bn to help fund a successful bid for Syasinvest, one of the most sought-after and viciously fought-over prizes of Russia's privatisation process.

The sell-off of the telecommunications company has long been shrouded in controversy. It triggered a squabble between the losing bidders and the government. And it was at the centre of a political scandal after it was revealed last November that Anatoly Chubais, Boris Yeltsin's right-hand man and economics guru, and several other officials each accepted \$90,000 advances for an unpublished book from a publishing company linked with Uneximbank, which led the winning consortium.

Three officials were promptly sacked over the scandal by Mr Yeltsin, delivering a blow to Mr Chubais's reformist team from which it has yet fully to recover. "There is obviously no evidence that Mr Soros did anything untoward," said one Western financial analyst in Moscow. "But you have to wonder if his loan may well have been a sweetener for the Syasinvest deal."

Intriguingly, the Russian gov-

ernment approached Mr Soros for a second loan in December, which he declined, arguing that "he didn't want to make a habit of it".

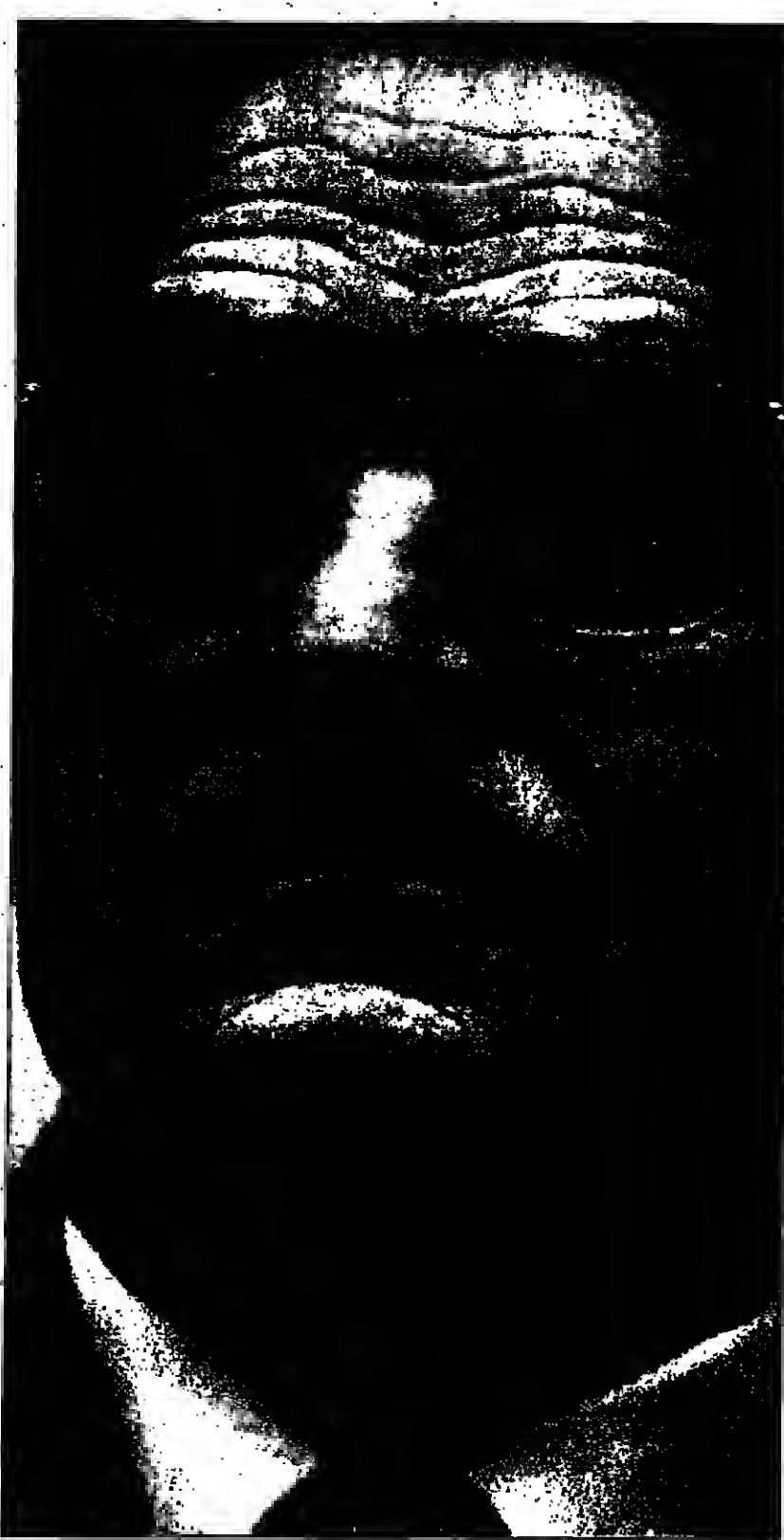
Mr Soros—who has spent \$350m on charitable projects in Russia in the last decade—said his loan was to bridge a gap before a \$2bn eurobond issue in July. The financier has suggested that the government turned to him because it did not want to undermine the confidence of Western bankers involved in the issue.

But the move is also a measure of the anxiety of the government about the social and political consequences if it failed to do something to ease the massive crisis of unpaid wages and pensions, which have prompted strikes and protests across the country. Mr Yeltsin had set a deadline for paying off pensions of 1 July 1997, raising the possibility that Mr Soros's money was, in fact, used for this purpose.

Sources indicated yesterday that the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which is closely monitoring Russia's finances, was not informed of the Soros loan. But neither has it caused its officials great concern.

However, the IMF will be closely watching for further evidence that Russia is discreetly borrowing from Western banks and financiers in order to offset its problems, which include an shortfall in revenues of more than \$8bn. At the height of the Asian crisis at the end of last year, it quietly borrowed \$950m from Western banks, again to meet its wages bill.

Matters are unlikely to improve soon, despite the vote this week by the State Duma (lower house of parliament) to approve a 1998 budget. Observers say the budget could deepen the non-payments crisis as it overestimates revenues. If this cash does not come in the government will have to start slashing anew.



No time to lose: Soros is said to earn £2,500 a minute

Photograph: AP

HE'S not short of a few quid, that George Soros, writes Andrew Buncombe. Even by the standards of the world of high finance, he is considered an exception. He makes a million here, loses a million there. It doesn't really matter; he's always in the black.

And black is certainly an apt colour with which to link Mr Soros.

One of his most famous financial coups—and certainly the one which lodged the speculator in the wider public consciousness—occurred in September 1992, when he bet against Sterling. The then Tory Chancellor Norman Lamont scored one of the financial own goals of the century and Britain lost billions before the Bank of England finally conceded that it had to devalue the pound. They called it Black Wednesday, but it wasn't a bad day for Soros; he made £600m.

In 1993 he was reckoned to be the biggest earner on Wall Street and analysts estimated he makes around £2,500 a minute.

So when the Kremlin fell into financial difficulties last summer and needed a friendly financier to help them out with a few hundred million pounds or so, Soros was the perfect man.

And all this wealth comes from just betting on the financial markets, guessing which currencies are going to boom and which are going to bust. When to buy, and when to sell. When to invest and when to get out. He makes Gordon Gekko look like an amateur.

By general consensus he has set the tone for a new generation of large, professional investors, who run so-called hedge funds for wealthy clients. It is said markets often hang on his predictions on the fortunes of gold, silver and shares. An interview he once gave on Germany's fortunes caused the Mark to fall.

By his own admission, Soros is a gambler,

IN THE NEWS

GEORGE SOROS

albeit, a very good one. "It just so happens that I play the game better and bigger than most people," he once said, sitting in the 33rd floor of his New York offices.

But it hasn't always been midtown Manhattan for Mr Soros. He was born in Hungary, and fled as a teenager when the Nazis invaded Budapest. He had no place for Jewish family. He arrived in Britain at the end of the war, penniless and desperate to build himself a future. He studied at the LSE before moving to New York.

There he learnt the trade of finance and investment and by 1969 Soros, then aged 39, was in a position to start his now famous Quantum offshore fund. He told potential investors the purpose of the fund was to "enable sophisticated investors to participate in an internationally diversified investment portfolio". By 1972 the fund—registered in the Dutch Antilles but run from New York by Soros Fund Management—was worth £20m. These days it's worth about £1.2 billion and Soros ranks as America's 27th richest person.

He is committed to issues such as Bosnia, the arts, minority rights and democracy. He has foundations in Russia and Eastern Europe which distribute around \$300m dollars a year, the most he was allowed to donate under US tax law.

Soros could be described as a philosopher, a theorist, a philanthropist and a financial genius. But above all, he's a good man to tap up if you're ever short.

MAN WHO BROKE THE BANK

George Soros, worth an estimated £2,500m and one of the world's 150 richest people, is most famously known as the Man who broke the Bank of England. The title came from his actions in September 1992, when he bet against the fortunes of sterling as the chancellor, Norman Lamont, tried to prop up the pound. Britain lost billions as Mr Lamont squandered its gold reserves before the Bank of England got out the white flag and devalued the currency. The event, which was to cost Mr Lamont his job, was known as Black Wednesday, but it was a marvellous day for Mr Soros, who made more than £500m by speculating against sterling.

AND ALSO LOST MILLIONS

Often overlooked by those chronicling the legendary exploits of Mr Soros is day he lost twice as much as his Black Wednesday winnings, when the worldwide mar-

kets tumbled in October 1997. Mr Soros's Quantum Fund alone lost £600m, while five other Soros funds, managed by his right-hand man, Stanley Druckenmiller, lost a similar amount. But, perhaps surprisingly, this was not the first time he had lost millions. In 1987 he lost £450m overnight after wrongly predicting there would be a crash in Tokyo and selling up. He shrugged the loss off, taking his wife to a dinner party.

QUANTUM LEAPS AND BOUNDS

Mr Soros's most famous fund is the Quantum Fund, which he launched in 1969 with £4m. It operates by charging clients to invest their money in currency, commodity and interest-rate markets as well as securities and equities. Anyone who invested £7,000 in 1969 and reinvested their dividends will be pleased to learn that their money is now worth £10m.

First performance of the play that was too hot to handle

FIRST NIGHT
Not About Nightingales
National Theatre, London

A PIECE of 20th century theatre history took place last night as the National Theatre presented the world premiere of a Tennessee Williams play—a work which has never been seen nor even read until now, writes David Lister.

The late author of such emotionally charged classics as *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Cat On A Hot Tin Roof*, who died in 1983, is thought to have written the piece when he was 26, six years before making his name with *The Glass Menagerie*.

Not About Nightingales was never produced, and does not appear in any of the author's collected works. It was brought to light by Vanessa Redgrave, who read a reference to it in a biography, persuaded the Williams estate to release the manuscript and then approached National Theatre artistic director Trevor Nunn to stage it in a co-production with her own company.

Nunn's staging opened last night in the National's small studio theatre, the Cottesloe.



Premiere: not new, just lost

Photograph: Gerald Lewis

Set in a men's prison, the play partly concerns homosexual relationships—the probable reason why American publishers and theatre managers were wary.

Trevor Nunn, who directed last night's world premiere, said he had found the work "baffling." It has, he said, "elements of the style which you would associate with Tennessee Williams, but is not really like a Tennessee Williams play. It is

about a young prisoner who has a poetic sense of himself and what he wants to achieve".

The play, which emerges as an impassioned plea for justice and humanity, was sparked off by a newspaper report of a prison riot in the Thirties in which four convicts were brutally murdered.

Nunn has recruited an Anglo-American cast in which Irish actor Fionn Lynch stars as the hero, Canary Jim, oppo-

site American Sherri Parker Lee and Corin Redgrave, Vanessa's brother, as the prison warden.

Vanessa Redgrave came across a reference to the play in a new biography about the young Tennessee Williams. She became intrigued and went to New York to urge Williams's long time friend, Maria St Juste, who managed his estate, to release the manuscript.

Maria St Juste, who has since died, had never released the play because she felt that if Williams had not released it in his lifetime he must have had his reasons.

However, Ms Redgrave and she had been friends for some time and she agreed to release it to her. The annotated typescript was found among the late playwright's papers, and Ms Redgrave secured the rights for its performance.

The one misfortune for her was that the main female part is a 19-year-old secretary, which she is too old to play. The one middle-aged woman in the play appears only for a brief scene. Nevertheless, she was keen to play that role, until Trevor Nunn told her it would be inappropriate for her to take such a small role.

Bride of Wildenstein must pay for surgery

By Marcus Tanner

JOCELYNE Wildenstein, whose addiction to plastic surgery has famously wrought havoc with her face, will have to pay for her own obsession in future.

That was the verdict of a US judge, ending the bitter divorce battle between Jocelyn and her wealthy but publicity-shy art collector ex-husband, Alec Wildenstein.

"The wife shall be responsible for all elective plastic surgery and cosmetic procedures and shall be responsible for their cost," said Manhattan

Supreme Court Judge Marilyn Diamond.

Jocelyn may have to pay for her own scalp work, but she will get a slice of her husband's money, in the form of \$2.4m maintenance a year and the town house in New York's Upper East Side where she caught her husband in bed last September with his teenage girlfriend. Mr Wildenstein will also have to throw in the 150-year-old chateau outside Paris at Igny, and a ranch in Kenya that comes with 66,000 acres and 55 artificial lakes.

Mr Wildenstein need not feel too much out of pocket. His

father, Daniel, is reputed to be the richest art dealer in the world, the judge said, with art galleries in New York, Paris and Tokyo.

Jocelyn, on the other hand, will have to cut back, and not just on those facial experiments that have given rise to such cruel jokes as "Bride of Wildenstein" (she prefers to think her stretched skin, wide-apart eyes and inflated lips look feline). Her new allowance, which works out at about \$140,000 a month, would scarcely cover the cost of a single *haute couture* dress from the Paris fashion shows she loves to attend. The

judge said Jocelyn Wildenstein also used to spend about \$10m a year on jewellery at Cartier.

Wildenstein fought his wife's financial demands, saying he only earned \$175,000 a year as his father's personal assistant, and owned no real property. He said the ex-couple's houses were owned by his 80-year-old father.

The judge said Wildenstein had never indicated that his wife spent too much, aside from opposing what he called "her bizarre psychological proclivity to have continuing plastic surgery and hair transplants and tattooing, which has submitted us to public ridicule".

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Pollution disaster at power station

By Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

BRITAIN'S most expensive anti-pollution equipment has broken down after just four years, leading to a surge in emissions of acid-rain gases from Western Europe's largest power station. Now National Power is seeking permission to run its Drax power station near York for at least the next few months with its fume-cleaning plant out of action.

The £640m flue gas desulphurisation (FGD) equipment removes about 90 per cent of the sulphur dioxide from the 4,000 megawatt coal-fired station's exhaust fumes. The gas is a leading air pollutant and a major contributor to acid rain, which damages forests and buildings.

The shut down is due to cracks in the 12 fans, each 15 feet across, which blow the hot gases through six FGD units.

They were discovered during emergency checks made after a similar fan at an Italian power station shattered at speed. Inspectors found all of Drax's fans were failing, but while some had only tiny cracks others had spread more than halfway through inch-thick steel. The structures carry vast stresses, each weighing 11 tons and spinning at 10 revolutions per second.

All the fans, built by Howdens in Belfast, will now have to be replaced, which may take two years and will cost millions.

Under its authorisation - or licence to pollute - from the Government's Environment Agency, Drax can produce 100,000 tons of sulphur dioxide a year. But with the FGD out of action, the power station will break this limit by mid-summer if it carries on burning coal.

National Power has applied for a temporary increase in

annual emission levels up to 270,000 tons. The agency has not yet decided whether to grant this, but has asked the company to explain how it will get the FGD equipment repaired as fast as possible.

The company said it was vital that Drax was allowed to carry on working. "The fact is, that even with the FGD out of action, it is still one of the two cleanest coal-fired power stations in Britain," a spokesman said. It is a modern, high-efficiency plant using low-sulphur coal from the nearby Selby pit. The only other British power station with FGD is PowerGen's Ratcliffe-on-Soar plant in Nottinghamshire.

Don Ridley, the Environment Agency manager handling the Drax shutdown, accepted this argument for keeping Drax running. "But we also want to ensure pollution is minimised," he said.



Women united: Somali-born supermodel Waris Dirie, United Nations special ambassador on female genital mutilation, launching the UN-led Face to Face campaign for women's equal rights yesterday in London. She was a victim of genital mutilation at the age of five. Photograph: Rui Xavier

University relief as cuts reversed

By Ben Russell
Education Correspondent

ACADEMICS won a reprieve yesterday as funding chiefs announced increased budgets for the vast majority of universities.

All but 24 of England's universities and colleges of higher education will get a real-terms increase in grant, and no institution will be cut by more than one per cent next year, the Higher Education Funding Council for England said.

Professor Brian Fender, HEFCE chief executive, said the £3.8bn budget represented a 2.7 per cent increase on the current year, slightly above inflation.

The allocations would limit cuts in funding per student to one per cent, significantly better than the 35 per cent fall absorbed by universities over the past eight years. "Some movement in the right direction is how we would describe it," he said.

The allocations include proceeds from the £1,000-a-year tuition fees to be imposed on undergraduates for the first time in October.

Vice chancellors welcomed the announcement, but warned the settlement did nothing to meet Sir Ron Dearing's recommendation that an extra £200m should be ploughed into improvements to university buildings and equipment.

Diana Warwick, chief executive of the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals, said: "While this is a welcome step in the right direction for England, there is a long way to go in addressing the financial crisis still facing universities and colleges."

Lecturers praised funding chiefs for limiting the cuts, but warned of the effects on the 24 universities and colleges facing

a fall in income in real terms. Institutions facing a slight real-terms cut include Oxford, Manchester and the London School of Economics.

An LSE spokeswoman said: "It's really not very good, but it's a lot better than we thought it was going to be."

David Trieman, general secretary of the Association of University Teachers, said: "The universities are hanging on by their finger nails. We recognise a serious effort is being made to inject stability but it remains a constant problem while all the big policy decisions for higher education are on ice."

Professor Fender said he hoped the Government's fundamental spending review would yield extra money for universities in future years.

The total number of university places funded will rise by 6,000 to 738,000 next year; universities will learn later this month whether their numbers can increase.

But Professor Fender said he had no details about how many people would enter university as part of Prime Minister Tony Blair's pledge to offer 500,000 extra university and college places by 2002.

"We have been arguing for a fair share of these 500,000 places, but they certainly cannot be offered on the cheap; we will need this to be fully funded."

This year's allocations will not affect college fees, which channel an extra £35m into Oxford and Cambridge. The HEFCE had sent a confidential report to ministers, and was awaiting a decision on the issue, Professor Fender said.

Last week it emerged that Tony Blair had backed down over plans to cut the extra Oxbridge grant.

Peers block move for cheap medicine

By Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

PEERS last night stopped the Government from launching a court challenge which could have given supermarkets the right to sell non-prescription drugs, such as headache pills and cough mixture, at cut prices.

ASDA, the supermarket chain, accused the peers of ignoring consumers' interests and warned they "could legally enshrine price-fixing by manufacturers on everyday medicines and vitamins".

The Consumers' Association attacked the Lords' decision as a "tax on the infirm" and said it would mean people would continue paying inflated prices for over-the-counter medicines.

The defeat - the third for the Government in a week - came during the final stages of the

Competition Bill when a cross-party amendment was approved by 138 to 81 to stop the Office of Fair Trading challenging resale price maintenance on over-the-counter medicines in the restrictive practices court.

The President of the Board of Trade, Margaret Beckett, could seek to overturn the defeat in the Commons, but the Government now faces a dilemma. Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, and a group of 133 Labour MPs are backing the pharmacists, who warn they will be forced out of business if supermarkets are allowed to slash the price of non-prescription drugs.

The community pharmacy action group has been successful in the Lords, and will be stepping up its efforts to prevent the Government reversing the vote with its majority in the Commons.

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Nasa spacecraft detects water on the Moon

By Charles Arthur
Science Editor

YES, there is water on the Moon: 11 million to 330 million tonnes of it, dispersed over 25,000 square miles at the satellite's poles, the US space agency said last night.

Nasa's *Lunar Prospector* craft has found that water, in the form of ice, is present in huge amounts beneath the surface,

which could make it possible to set up a permanent base in space.

In contrast to the bullish spirit 18 months ago, when its scientists said that they had found fossil evidence of life on Mars, Nasa was restrained yesterday. It said the ice is distributed in "scattered pockets", meaning its usefulness is "not immediately clear. While the evidence of water ice is quite strong, the

water signal (detected by the spacecraft's instruments) is relatively weak," said William Feldman, a Department of Energy researcher. "Our data are consistent with the presence of water ice in very low concentrations across a significant number of craters."

The question will be how easy it is to "mine" the ice and turn it into water, then into its constituent hydrogen and oxy-

gen. Speaking at Nasa's Ames Research Centre in Moffett Field, California, chief investigator Alan Binder said: "If you picked up a cubic yard of soil in the cold areas of the pole, you might find as much as one, two, maybe five gallons of water per cubic yard. If... we are dealing with 100 million metric tonnes, that's equivalent to a lake two miles on a side, four square miles, and about 35ft

deep. That's a lot of water." Most of it is at the lunar north pole, where 18,000 square miles are reckoned to be water-bearing, compared to 7,200 square miles at the south pole. Since the Apollo landings 1969-72, scientists thought the Moon was probably dry.

Last year the *Clementine* mission found evidence suggesting water at the poles - perhaps from comets which

crashed there. The \$65m (£41m) *Lunar Prospector* launched in January, marked Nasa's first return to the Moon since the last manned landing mission, *Apollo 17*, in 1972.

Lunar Prospector carried instruments to detect alpha particles, gamma rays and neutrons, with a radar experiment. The data meant scientists could analyse the lunar surface's composition and pinpoint gravi-

ty and magnetic features. The spacecraft will spend the rest of year mapping the Moon's surface. When it runs out of fuel, it will crash into the Moon, so as not to become a hazard to future missions.

If water can be mined on the Moon, it would ease the need of sending a supply from Earth. Water weighs 2kg per litre - the minimum daily requirement for a human - and it could take

thousands of gallons to maintain a permanent Moon complex.

The presence of water could also enable astronauts to make their own breathing oxygen and to use the Moon as sort of a space-based filling station. Water can be split into its components, hydrogen and oxygen. Oxygen could be used for breathing and the combination of hydrogen and oxygen can be used as a rocket fuel.

Dream on: Lunar pioneers reach for the stars

A BRANCH of science that has been languishing for decades will be revived. In the 1970s, the Moon was declared dry (by the Apollo missions, which landed on the equivalent of the Equator) and Mars declared dead (by the Viking landers).

People who wanted us to set up permanent bases on both those bodies were turned back from their grand plans, as others asked why spend billions of dollars or pounds of public money to go to places which are so hostile, and useless?

In the past 18 months though, Mars has been declared to have had life (at least, scientists reckoned so) and now the Moon to have water.

Suddenly, space travel is back on the agenda. For not only does the Moon have water at its poles, but planetary geologists reckon there is water at Mars's poles too.

Water matters because humans need at least two litres a day to survive. However, carrying it out of the Earth's gravitational field is very expensive because it is heavy and can't be compressed: two litres of water will always take up two litres of space and weigh two kilograms. Raising that out of the Earth's gravity will cost £14,000 in fuel. Providing enough for a permanent lunar colony would require regular supply ships and that makes a base on a dry Moon impractical.

But if there is water already there,



Man on the moon: An artist's impression of how a permanent lunar base might look. Such a base could be used to build and launch rockets, allowing man to go even further into space.

Picture: David Hardy
Science Photo Library

everything changes. "When you're thinking of a permanent lunar base, this makes it possible," said Dr Ellen Stofan, a Nasa scientist who is planning studies for water on Mars.

Ice can be melted for drinking; and it

can be electrolysed (using the free solar power) into oxygen for breathing, and hydrogen as a rocket fuel.

"It's terribly exciting in terms of potential, as a science base if nothing else." It would be a perfect site for astrochemical

observation: if you thought the Hubble Space Telescope produced impressive pictures, wait until there's a Moon Observatory.

But it's not the science value that people see. The Moon could be used as an as-

ssembly base for new rockets which would take off for more distant targets: initially Mars, but in time even further afield.

A low-gravity base would be an ideal staging post on the way to other planets. For instance, a Mars mission could send its

rocket to the Moon partly-fuelled, or even partly-built; then you could finish building it in low gravity. "Anything that we don't have to lift out of the Earth's gravity is a saving," said Dr Stofan.

A further advantage is that if something goes wrong, it's easier to escape from the Moon than from a mission to Mars. "It's only three days away," explained Dr Stofan. "You can bail out more easily - it's a whole different thing if you're eight or nine months out."

How soon will it arrive, and how big will it be? That depends on how easy it is to build reliable shelters - safe from meteorites - and to mine the ice. Certainly, by the middle of the next century there will be something permanent there.

How much will it cost? Certainly, billions. "It will take an international effort," said Dr Stofan. "But I think that's the way everybody would want to do it." However, she doesn't see it supplanting the present efforts to build an International Space Station to replace the aging *Mir*. "The space station is the first step in working outside the Earth's atmosphere," said Dr Stofan. "But you have to do it slowly. We've never tried to build anything in space. People forget how complex it is: they see *Star Trek* on TV and think 'Oh, we're there already'. Really, it's much more complicated, and we have to do it one step at a time."

Navy hit by broadside over buying endangered wood

By Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

THE MINISTRY OF Defence has bought hundreds of tonnes of endangered Brazilian mahogany from a company involved in illegal logging, the environmental pressure group Friends of the Earth alleges.

The tough, dark hardwood from the Amazon rainforest is becoming ever scarcer. While logging companies routinely flout Brazil's own laws and controls on the trade, there is hardly any regrowth because mahogany is very difficult to grow in plantations.

Yesterday, the MoD admitted it had purchased more than 200 tonnes of the tropical tim-

ber, but said it had seen no "conclusive" evidence that it had been cut down and extracted illegally. It admitted that it relied on its supplier's declaration that the wood was produced legally, rather than carrying out its own checks.

The ministry declined to say exactly why the Navy needed mahogany, what ships it would be used for, and why oak - the traditional shipbuilding timber - from sustainable sources in Britain could not be used instead.

"It's very durable and workable, and we use it only for refurbishing decking and sheeting," said a spokesman.

But the British government's own view is that the mighty ma-

hogany is in trouble. That is why it pressed last year for exports to be controlled under the Convention on the Trade in Endangered Species - even though Britain is one of the world's biggest importers.

Friends of the Earth have sent a report on the illegal logging to the Secretary of State for Defence, George Robertson, following a nine-month investigation in Brazil during which both timber shipments and documents were tracked from forests and Indian reserves.

The MoD's supplier was a UK company, Parker Kislisbury, which in turn purchased the timber from a major Brazilian timber trader.

Friends of the Earth say

their investigation found the Brazilian firm had taken thousands of tonnes more mahogany from forests than it was entitled to under authorisations from the Brazilian environment agency.

Parker Kislisbury's managing director, Ole Salven, insisted his firm had done all it reasonably could to ensure the mahogany was extracted legally. "We've shown due diligence," he said.

For rainforest campaigner Sarah Tyack said: "Illegal logging is rife and the whole certification system is completely flakey."

Given the illegality that surrounds the trade, the MoD should not take any mahogany from Brazil at all, she added.

Mass killer buried lover under patio

A FORMER Broadmoor inmate and mass killer murdered his lover and buried her under a patio, then shot himself, an inquest at Windsor's coroner's court was told yesterday.

Paul Beecham, 55, killed Rita Riddlesworth with a single blow to the head, buried her in the garden and told her sons she had gone to visit a friend. Two weeks later he was found dead at the home they shared in Bracknell, Berkshire. East Berkshire coroner Robert Wilson recorded a verdict that Mrs Riddlesworth, 51, was unlawfully killed and Beecham committed suicide.

Beecham, sent to Broadmoor in 1969 for the manslaughter of his mother, father, grandfather and grandmother, was released in 1985. He met Mrs Riddlesworth through the League of Friends in 1981.

Sex abuse inquiry

Lincolnshire police have launched a major investigation into allegations of indecency at three children's homes in the county. The inquiry will centre on allegations of indecency at the homes between the mid 1980's and mid 1990's.

Police began their operation at the request of Lincolnshire Social Services. The inquiry revolves around the activities of staff who are no longer employed by the department.



New beginning for police inspector

A FEMALE police officer who brought a successful victimisation case against Lincolnshire Police has resigned and will transfer next week to the Humberside force, which investigated her employers.

Inspector Cydara Fleming (pictured) was suspended on full pay for two years pending disciplinary charges brought by Lincolnshire Police after she was caught trying to secretly tape-record colleagues. An industrial tribunal condemned senior police officers for a "deplorable" attitude to equality, and all charges against Inspector Fleming were dropped. Two days ago she arrived at Lincolnshire HQ to receive back her warrant card and uniform.

Prescott's Jag gets green replacement

JAGUAR is replacing John Prescott's £35,000 ministerial car with a P-registered model that can be converted to liquid gas to underline his commitment to green transport policies.

The Deputy Prime Minister last night told MPs that Jaguar had been unable to convert his ministerial Jag but had agreed to replace it at no extra cost to the taxpayer. The car will be one of only two Jaguars in the country which are converted to take gas power. The car is secondhand, and was used by Jaguar as a test vehicle.

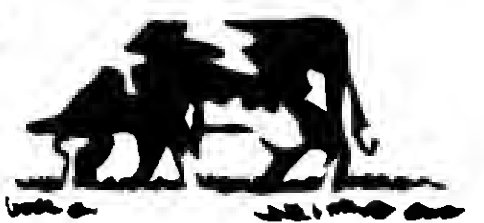
He is hoping to take delivery of the car very shortly and is certain to be hoping to have the keys in time for the Chancellor's Budget on 17 March, which is expected to contain higher taxes on "gas guzzlers".

On the run again

TEENAGER Peter Kerry, who hit the headlines in 1995 when he ran away to Malaysia with his father's passport and credit card, has gone missing again. This trip could cost him a scholarship to a top public school worth nearly £30,000 over two years. Harrow school, in north London, where Peter, 17, was a place to do A Levels has said he may have to forfeit the award when he returns.

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Ringing the charges: Transport of delight (left); the rugby player Rob Andrew; a night-clubber keeping in touch; cricketer Phil Tufnell stumping up; a businessman with essential tool of the trade; and a walker checking in to base

Watchdog accuses mobile-phone firms of rip-off

By Glenda Cooper
Social Affairs Correspondent

CONSUMERS who call mobile phones are being ripped off with high prices, the telephone watchdog Ofcom said yesterday. Its director-general, Don Cruickshank said he wanted to see the cost of calls from fixed lines to mobiles slashed by more than a third, from 32p to 20p. He has referred British Telecom and the two biggest mobile networks, Vodafone and Cellnet, to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The networks stand to lose £200m a year if the MMC agrees with Ofcom. "Vodafone, Cellnet and BT are using their control of this bottleneck and their market

power to charge customers too much," said Mr Cruickshank. "I think it is fair to say being ripped off is the right phrase."

He hoped the MMC would use the opportunity to look at pricing of mobiles as a whole. Around 5 billion minutes are spent on mobile phones every year and the number is growing by 40 per cent. In January the networks revealed record connections in the run-up to Christmas and currently 8 million people own mobile phones.

The networks argue that the cost of calls was reduced from 37p to 32p last October but Mr Cruickshank said it had been "progress under duress" and it was not enough. While local day calls now cost 3.5p

per minute and national calls cost 6.7p, calls to mobile phones cost 32p. "To the ordinary consumer that instinctively looks wrong, and they are dead right," Mr Cruickshank added. "What worries people, for example, is when they have made a five-minute call to a plumber or a friend for a quick chat, and they then get a bill for around £2.30." At the moment the customer is charged 32p for a minute's call to a mobile from a fixed line. Of that 19p goes to Vodafone or Cellnet and 6.5p to BT. The rest is accounted for by VAT and discount.

Ofcom says that it should be reduced to 20p, with Vodafone getting 13p and BT 4p. They feel there is no justification for BT charging sig-

nificantly more for a mobile than a landline. "This is business BT are not making any effort to generate. This is business that the advertising campaigns of companies like Vodafone and Orange are generating," said Mr Cruickshank. "Quite why BT's take should be higher for calling to mobile phones than fixed lines escapes me."

Yesterday's announcement follows an 18-month investigation by Ofcom into charges made from a mobile phone to a landline. The study found British customers are paying some of the highest charges in the world. Cellnet and Vodafone were also singled out for charges imposed on customers when calls to their mobile phones go unanswered or are

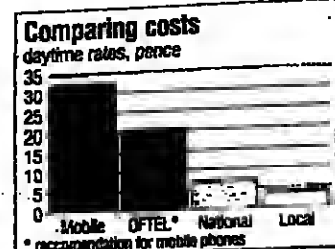
diverted to another number. A spokesman for BT said yesterday that the company would co-operate with the MMC investigation but added: "We emphatically reject the suggestion that we are ripping off callers. The major component of the price charged to our customers is what we have to pay the mobile companies for delivering the call."

Chris Gent, chief executive of Vodafone, said: "Competition is the best form of regulation and the UK, with four mobile phone operators, is the most competitive market in Europe. We believe the reference to the MMC was not necessary, as the gap between the actual rate of decline of the cost of calls to mobiles and Ofcom's target is not that

great." Securicor, 40-per-cent shareholder in Cellnet, said the company would be giving "constructive support" to the MMC review but considered that its rates were "fully justified".

Mr Cruickshank said he would like to see uniform prices for all calls to all mobile networks, including smaller operators like Orange and One2One, introduced within the next two years.

But he added that the overall prices paid by customers, including the cost of handsets, line rental and call charges, put Britain in the top of the world league for business customers, although prices for residential users remained less competitive.



Price of a 3 minute call
from fixed to mobile, £

Country	Full price	Excluding tax
France	1.24	0.82
Germany	1.27	0.81
Ireland	1.08	0.67
Italy	1.12	0.43
Spain	1.15	0.66
UK	1.34	0.92

Source: Philip Tufnell/Ofcom

Mardi Gra hunt has cost £1m

By Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

SCOTLAND YARD has spent more than £1m hunting the Mardi Gra bomber, who struck for the 33rd time on Wednesday when a package exploded firing shotgun pellets into a teenager's leg.

A psychologist has provided the police with an "offender profile" of the extortionist in an attempt to obtain clues into his character and motivation. Detectives hope the use of a profiler, made famous by the *Cracker* television series, will help open up new lines of inquiry. There is also speculation that the police may be trying to set up a dialogue with the offender, possibly through personal adverts in a newspaper.

The vast amount of money being spent by the Metropolitan Police on trying to uncover the self-styled Mardi Gra terrorist shows the growing concern that someone could be seriously maimed or killed by one of his home-made explosive devices.

The danger was illustrated in the most recent incident on Wednesday night in which a device containing a shotgun cartridge exploded outside a Sainsbury's store in Forest Hill, south-east London, injuring a 17-year-old youth.

Last month, the same store was targeted when a motorist suffered shock after a small device, hidden in a plastic bag he had found near the supermarket, exploded in his car.

The 17-year-old suffered wounds to his leg, although the injuries were not serious. A spokeswoman for Scotland Yard

said: "Officers have examined the device and by the way it is constructed can confirm it is the work of the Mardi Gra bomber."

A senior Scotland Yard source confirmed that more than £1m had been spent on the investigation so far and that an offender profile had been obtained. He said: "Profiling can give us a range of options and a range of motivations."

He added: "[This is] a person who is sophisticated enough to put together the devices and has evaded detection for many months. Although no one has been killed so far, that's more by luck than design."

Profiling has had mixed success, although usually it can only provide extra clues rather than unveiling the name of the criminal.

The Mardi Gra bomber is clearly very skilful at leaving few clues. This has led to speculation that he - or at an outside chance, she - is a former or serving police officer, or member of the security services.

The bomber began in 1994 and first targeted Barclays Bank and moved to Sainsbury's in 1996. It is believed he has already struck three times this year. The second most recent attack was on 12 February near the Forest Hill store. The motorist involved threw the bag out of his car in shock after it exploded. He had picked it up after he saw it unattended near the store. A week earlier, a device exploded at a bus stop near a Sainsbury's in Ealing. No one was hurt.

Anyone with information should call the police confidential hotline on 0800 789321.

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Nuclear fuel firm to sponsor Scouts

ENVIRONMENTAL campaigners have attacked a sponsorship deal which will see scouts' proficiency badges carrying the logo of the country's nuclear power company.

British Nuclear Fuels (BNFL) announced that it is to pay the Scout Association £30,000 over three years in return for its name to be carried on the popular scientist's badge.

But Friends of the Earth criticised the plans as a "cynical" exercise and an attempt to cash in on the scouts' good image. Tony Juniper, FoE campaigns director, said: "This is the

typical strategy of a company which finds itself fielding fierce public criticism and turns to a cash-strapped good cause to buy an advantage through relatively small amounts of money. It is the most cynical PR one can imagine."

As part of the deal, scouts will be given access to BNFL's scientists, laboratories and visitor centre at Sellafield nuclear power station in Cumbria to help them complete the tasks needed to earn the badge.

John Fogg, spokesman for the Scout Association, said the movement's founder, Lord Baden-Powell, would have approved because of his interest in new technology. "As far as BNFL itself is concerned, we do not have a view or judgment that is adverse about this organisation."

Ann Johnson, spokeswoman for BNFL, said: "Our involvement with the project not only enables us to offer something to young people in the community but also may well encourage some of them to think about science and engineering as a future career."



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Lords to study cannabis risks

By Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

THE scientific risks of taking cannabis for medical and recreational purposes are to be examined by a Lords investigation, it was announced yesterday. Lord Perry of Walton, who said the committee of peers had agreed not to discuss whether any of them had taken the drug, told a press conference the investigation was not expected to result in a call for legalisation.

But it would offer an informed scientific assessment of the balance of risks relating to the drug. The inquiry by the Lords Committee on Science and Technology, half of whose members are medically qualified, will be advised by Leslie Iverson, visiting Professor of Pharmacology at Oxford University, who specialises in the effects of drugs on the brain. The two key questions to be addressed are: "How strong is the scientific evidence in favour of permitting medical use?" and "How strong is the scientific evidence in favour of maintaining prohibition of recreational use?"

Lord Perry, a Liberal Democrat peer who is a former Professor of Pharmacology and founding vice-chancellor of the



Perry: Silent on tastes of the committee members

Open University, said: "The recreational use of alcohol and tobacco are attached by risks. There is no ban on either at the moment."

"The question then arises, at what level of risk should people be allowed to make their own judgment about whether they're prepared to take that risk? It's a question of whether the risks that are obtained in evidence are regarded as sufficient to warrant a government ban, or whether they are risks that individuals might be expected to take for themselves - like tobacco, like alcohol, like any of the things, like coffee, like tea. They're all drugs that have risks."

Asked what drugs he took

himself, Lord Perry said: "We did discuss this in committee and decided that what we took was private." When pressed, he said he did drink coffee and tea, and occasionally drank alcohol, but did not smoke tobacco.

The committee had discussed cannabis and members' personal use of it. "We decided not to make public... that that was not a matter we were going to make public." The committee, which will take written submissions as well as evidence in public sessions, starts its hearings with the Advisory Council on Misuse of Drugs on 7 April, with evidence later in April to be taken from the British Medical Association and the authors of its report on therapeutic use of cannabis; the Alliance for Cannabis Therapeutics; and the Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Evidence is to be sought on a number of questions, including: "What are the physiological effects (immediate, long-term and cumulative) of taking cannabis, in its various forms? What are the psychological effects? How do these effects vary with particular methods of preparation and administration? To what extent is cannabis addictive? To what extent do users develop tolerance to cannabis?"



Starting over: Student John Busby being tutored by Richard Maitland at the Second Chance School in Leeds yesterday

Photograph: Guzelian

School gives young a second chance to learn

By Ben Russell
Education Correspondent

BRITAIN'S first school for young people who missed out on education was opened yesterday by David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education.

The Second Chance School in Leeds will help 300 people between 16 and 25 catch up with skills designed to improve their chances of getting a job.

Ministers hope similar projects will develop in another 17 cities.

Mr Blunkett said: "In the past we failed many of our youngsters; 45,000 of them have no qualifications by the time they leave school. There will always be a need for people to learn and relearn. School failure can be a life sentence to unemployment and poverty."

He said he hoped the project would have a "nation-wide influence".

The European Commissioner for science and research, Edith Cresson, was also at the launch and said that 10 to 15 per cent left school in the EU without basic literacy skills. "This need is a real one and we're trying to find a way to answer it," she added.

Keith Hall, 23, who is unemployed, is one of the first students. He said: "My schooling wasn't up to scratch. It was terrible and the system failed me."

Universities should review their admissions to give more opportunities to people without traditional qualifications, Baroness Blackstone, education minister, told vice chancellors at a conference in London yesterday.

Lady Blackstone told the conference, sponsored by *The Independent*: "We want higher education to offer more opportunities later in life for those who missed out first time."

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Tory old guard under fire over hunting Bill

By Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

FIVE former cabinet ministers, attacked yesterday as the "old guard" of the Tory party, will today lead the moves to stop the private member's Bill banning fox-hunting.

Douglas Hogg, the former agriculture minister, who was vilified by the farmers over the BSE crisis during his term of office, has tabled 124 separate amendments of his own which will slow progress on the anti-hunting Bill to a snail's pace.

Michael Heseltine, the former deputy prime minister, who led the charge against the Bill's second reading, has been joined by John MacGregor, Tom King and Sir Brian Mawhinney in tabling amendments.

Tony Blair will be in Scotland today for a keynote speech to the

party conference in Perth, and will not be in the House to support the Bill by Mike Foster, the Labour MP for Worcester.

In spite of the massive vote in support of the Bill, government sources have made no secret that they would prefer to see it stopped before it reaches the Lords, where it would threaten the main legislative programme.

The Government's embarrassment over the Bill has been heightened following last week's countryside march in London, which forced a series of pre-emptive concessions on countryside issues.

Mr Foster's Bill is likely to survive a full day of debate today but is expected to be killed next Friday through lack of parliamentary time.

Home Office ministers are alarmed that anti-hunting MPs will then seek to attach a ban

on fox-hunting to the Government's Crime and Disorder Bill in the next session.

To head off that threat, there is increasing support within the Government for a ban on fox-hunting to be subjected to an independent cross-party inquiry by two select committees - home affairs and agriculture. Both pro- and anti-hunting groups delivered have petitions to Downing Street, each signed by more than a million people. Faced with such strong emotions, Mr Blair is expected to support any move which can put the hunters and their opponents in the long grass.

Mr Foster said: "The type of people that are looking to block the Bill are the old guard; they're yesterday's politicians and there's a vast difference between the politics of today ... and pre-1 May."

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Chelsea Football Club has launched its online MegaStore, built and hosted by IBM Global Services. Supporters worldwide can purchase official merchandise and gather up-to-the-minute information on match results and players. The site gets an average 350,000 hits a day - that's a staggering four per second.



Solutions for a small planet

Doctors give rare good news for meat eaters

By Jeremy Laurence
Health Editor

RED-MEAT eaters breathed a sigh of relief yesterday when the Government watered down an earlier warning about the risk of cancer.

In an embarrassing turnaround, ministers issued new scientific advice that the largest meat eaters, consuming 140 grams or more a day, should cut down but that those eating the average amount of 90 grams a day need not change. People eating less than the average amount should not reduce their consumption because they may not get enough iron and other nutrients.

Last September, ministers published advice that even average meat eaters should "consider a reduction", after an extraordinary row among the members of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food and Nutrition Policy (Coma) which had been preparing a report on the subject for more than two years. That announcement triggered a storm of protest from the beleaguered meat industry which claimed that the advice had no scientific basis.

It has emerged that scientists on the committee could not agree the precise wording of the report leaving Frank

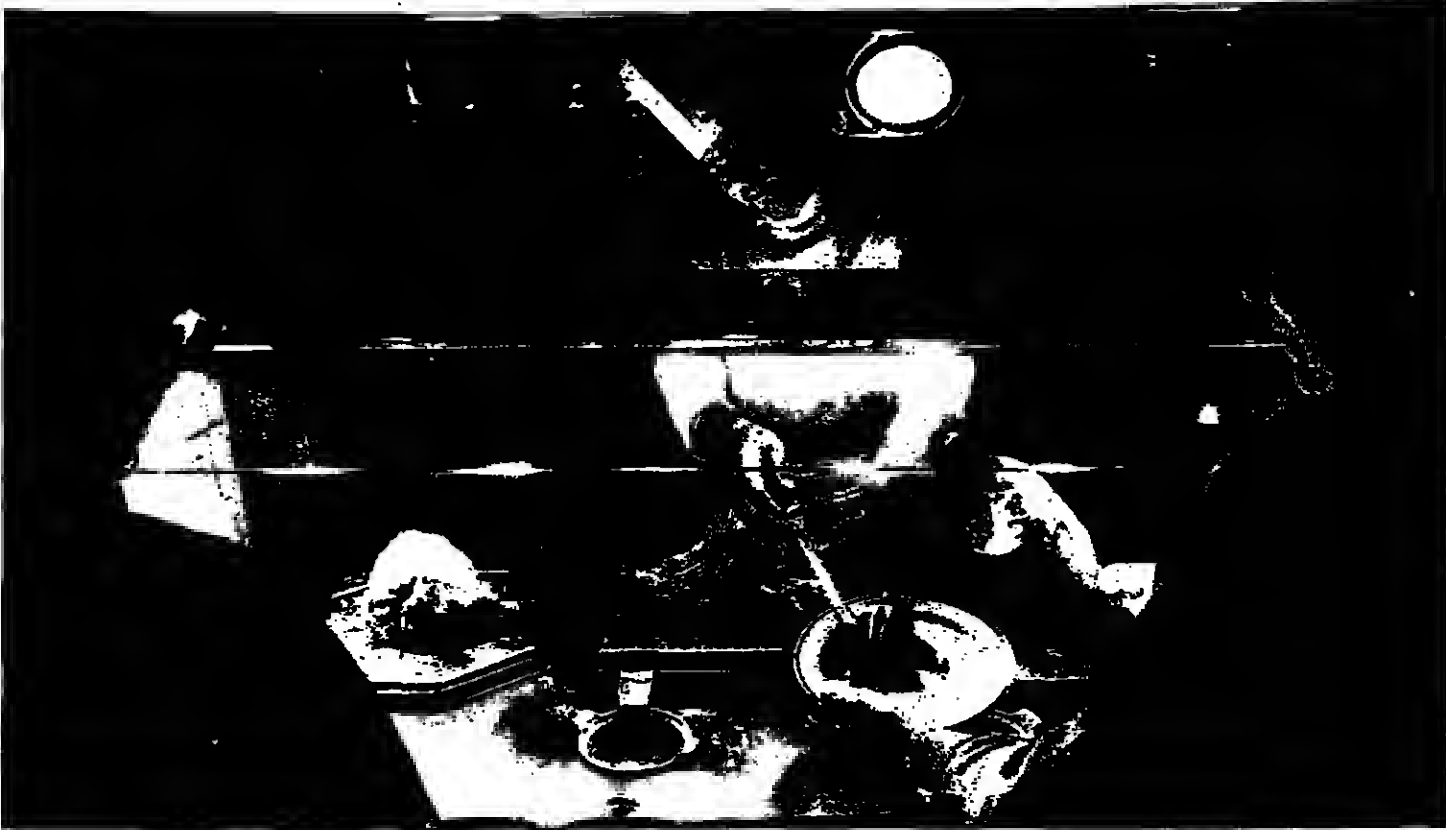
Dobson, the Secretary of State for Health, in the awkward position of having to change the advice. A panel set up by Coma to examine the link between meat eating and colon cancer concluded that the people consuming over 140 grams a day should cut down.

However, just before publication, Professor Philip James - a member of Coma but not of the panel, and the instigator of the Food Standards Agency - warned ministers that the advice was confusing and weak.

Professor James is also a member of the World Cancer Research Fund, which recommended an upper limit of 80 grams of red meat a day in a report released on the same day as the Coma advice last year. He argued that if the "danger" level was set at 140 grams a day that could encourage average meat eaters consuming 90 grams a day to increase their consumption.

Mr Dobson, worried about being seen as soft on consumer issues, halted printing of the report and ordered the committee to re-draft its advice which it did in the absence of the panel. The result was much stronger advice which was issued as a press release on 25 September but without the full report.

Problems arose when the



Chewed over: Differences of opinion among health experts and protests from the meat industry after publication of the original advice resulted in yesterday's revised guidance. Photograph: David Rose

WEIGHT WATCHING

THE Coma recommendations apply to red meat (beef, pork, lamb) but not to poultry and the quantities quoted are the cooked weight (meat loses weight during cooking). People eating more than 140 grams a day (5oz) - about one in six of the population - should cut down. One hundred and forty grams of cooked meat is approximately 200 grams raw.

Ham sandwich	30g
Bacon (two rashers)	50g
Pork pie (small)	60g
Quarterpounder hamburger	90g
Roast beef (three slices)	90g
Spagherdi bolognese	90g
Sausages (3-4)	140g
Steak (medium 6-7 oz)	170g

panel, led by Alan Jackson of Southampton University, was asked to ratify the new advice that had been issued in its absence. It refused to do so because, it said, it was not justified by the scientific evidence.

This led to the new, modified, version published yesterday with the full report. The report, "The Nutritional Aspects of the Development of Cancer", looks at all aspects of the diet and recommends eating more fruit, vegetables and fibre and avoiding getting fat. It also warns that high doses of vitamin and mineral supplements could be risky and recommends avoiding beta-carotene supplements

which have been linked with an increased risk of lung cancer. It says the finding on beta-carotene "raises the possibility that a change in the usual balance of carotenoids in the diet might lead to potentially

adverse perturbations in their absorption, metabolism or function. Such findings caution against the widespread use of moderate to high-dose micronutrient supplements, which cannot be assumed to

be without adverse effects." Sir Kenneth Calman, Chief Medical Officer, said: "Diet is a matter of personal choice but it is important that people have the information they need to decide what they want to eat."

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Heart pill linked to suicide risk

By Jeremy Laurence

A COMMON drug prescribed for heart problems may increase the risk of depression and suicide, doctors have found.

A study in Sweden has shown that suicide rates are higher among patients taking calcium channel blockers prescribed for angina (chest pain) and high blood pressure.

In one part of the study, involving a survey of 152 Swedish municipalities with a total population of 7.3 million, the researchers found a five-fold increase in suicides among those taking calcium channel blockers compared with other treatments for high blood pressure.

In absolute terms this meant one extra suicide a year for every 1,000 people taking the drugs.

In the past, several groups of heart drugs have been linked to depression. Dr Anne Melander and colleagues of Malmö University Hospital, suggest in the *British Medical Journal* that one reason for the higher suicide rate in men observed in many Western countries could be that they have more heart disease and are therefore more

likely to be prescribed heart drugs, and in particular calcium channel blockers.

Calcium channel blockers penetrate the blood brain barrier more easily than other heart drugs and "hence they have access to and may interfere with neurones and receptors involved in the regulation of mood," the researchers say. The drugs should be considered a possible cause of depression and suicide.

The study is the latest to ring alarm bells about calcium channel blockers, which have also been linked to a higher risk of heart attack in some patients. Those concerns were attributed to the early policy of giving high initial doses which were not tolerated well by patients with weak hearts. The new policy is to step up the dose more slowly over a longer period which appears to carry less risk.

Doubts remain however, and the current issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine* says that in the light of them, calcium channel blockers should be used as a second-line treatment only where other drugs, such as diuretics or beta-blockers, are unsuitable or have failed to work.

Drug testing ignores women

By Jeremy Laurence

MORE women take medicines than men at every stage of life yet drugs are tested on almost exclusively male groups, a report says today.

The sex bias against women in drug testing is reflected throughout the National Health Service which tends to focus on male concerns even though women are its main users.

The poor health care given to women is highlighted in the report which says £1bn a year could be saved if the needs of those aged over 45 were better understood.

It says more attention should be given to heart disease, often seen as an exclusively male condition, and screening for breast cancer, currently offered to women aged 50-64, should be extended to those of 65 and over.

The report by the Pennell Initiative, set up last year to raise awareness of the health needs of older women and funded by the drug company Wyeth, says the results of drug trials in men are often generalised to women although they may not affect them in the same way.

In the pre-menopausal age group, almost one-quarter of women take medicines, excluding the contraceptive pill, compared with one in six men. Post-menopausal, more than half of women take them compared with more than one in three men.

"Development of new drugs should specifically take account of the characteristics of women, particularly older women and those from ethnic minorities," it says.

Dame Rennie Fritchie, chair of the initiative, said: "Society thinks that women have a sell-by date of between 50 and 55. Women become more and more invisible as they get older and they don't have a voice. However, many of the things that affect women could be altered. By speaking out on their behalf it could make a real difference."

The report says most research into coronary heart disease is carried out on men and then generalised to women, even though it is the biggest cause of death among women over 45.

It also says women over 45 are twice as likely to suffer from depression as men of the same age.

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Doctor's boyfriend 'was like a timebomb'

THE murdered doctor Joan Francisco was warned that her alleged killer, Tony Diedrick, was "a walking time bomb", the High Court heard yesterday.

Ms Francisco's elder sister Celia said that she wrote a warning letter to her in December 1988, six years before the 27-year-old gynaecologist was found strangled with a vacuum cleaner cord at her flat in St John's Wood, north-west London.

Celia, 33, who is based in the United States, wrote that she had heard some very disturbing things from their mother about Joan's then boyfriend - "the infamous 'Tone'" - and an incident with a broken light-bulb.

It went on: "It seems to me he is a walking time bomb and honey, your time is running out. Don't forget he is from an extremely [underlined] violent background which has obviously had a lasting effect upon him, plus the incident with his girlfriend's nose. So why shouldn't he hurt you? It seems to be in his nature."

She told Joan that she should count herself lucky that the glass didn't catch her eyes. "Is the end of your medical career worth it for Tony Diedrick? ... does company and convenience outweigh the possibility of serious disablement? Think about it," Celia added that Joan was attractive, intelligent and articulate and should not sell herself short.

The letter, which was found among Ms Francisco's property after her death, was read out in court after Mr Justice Auld rejected objections by Mr

Diedrick's counsel, Ronald Thwaites QC.

Mr Diedrick, 38, who allegedly stalked Joan for months out of a "violent and perverted obsession" before killing her, is fighting an unprecedented civil action brought by the Francisco family. In what is thought to be the first civil action taken against someone when there has been no criminal prosecution connected to a murder, they are seeking up to £50,000 compensation for alleged assault and battery.

Mr Diedrick, who was in court yesterday, was granted in March 1994 and released without charge. But the family's counsel, Patrick O'Connor, says there is compelling circumstantial evidence which "pointed inexorably" towards his guilt.

Celia Francisco said that while her sister and Mr Diedrick were going out, she had arranged a job for him in America. "He was ... socially maladjusted. I would say he wasn't that trusting ... However ... if he felt he trusted you, he would become somewhat obsessive over you."

Ms Francisco said that she learned after writing the letter that Joan and Mr Diedrick had split up. After an incident in which Mr Diedrick broke into the family home in Acton, in February 1989, Joan didn't want anything to do with him.

"She feared for her life ... She had come to the decision that they were at the end of the relationship and it was final. However, Mr Diedrick didn't want to accept that."

The hearing continues today.

Stressed Eric and Famous Fred are the talk of the toons



People's choice: *Flatworld* by Daniel Greaves was picked by screen audiences as both favourite film and best for new perspectives. Above right, Carl Gorham's *Stressed Eric* won best international co-production and best scenario

By David Lister
Arts News Editor

OSCAR hopeful Joanna Quinn received a boost last night when she won a top prize at the British Animation Awards.

The film maker who has been nominated for best animated short film in the Oscars later this month won the best children's special for her Channel 4/SAC film *Famous Fred*. Based around a cat who has a secret life as a rock'n'roll star and wears Elvis Presley outfits, it was the unanimous choice of the children's jury from schools in London and Nottingham.

A previous Oscar winner, Daniel Greaves, won two of the four public choice awards voted for by audiences at the National Film Theatre and Museum of the Moving Image last month. His BBC film *Flatworld* won both favourite film and the new perspectives award.

Another winner in two categories was Carl Gorham's adult animated series *Stressed Eric* for BBC2, which stars ul-



cer-growing hero Eric Feeble.

Jonathan Hodgson's *Feyling My Way* won for most creative use of new technologies and Sarah Cox's *Three Wags to Go* was best film under 10 minutes. Two students won awards: Jim Lefevre, of the Edinburgh College of Art, for best directorial debut with the funny *Little Princess's Birthday*, and Andrew Higgins, of the Royal College of Art, the craft award for *Gourmand*.

The awards were presented at the National Film Theatre.

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Crack found in Three Graces

By David Lister
Arts News Editor

A HAIRLINE crack has been discovered on *The Three Graces*, the world's most expensive sculpture, while it was on an overseas loan to a Madrid benefactor, museum officials confirmed today.

The "very small fault", not visible to the naked eye, was discovered last November when the £7.6m sculpture arrived in Madrid from Edinburgh. It was discovered, above the shoulder of one of the women, when the group was being inspected under strong lighting upon its arrival.

The work was on loan to Baron Heinrich Thyssen-Bornemisza, who gave £800,000 towards its purchase. It is jointly owned by the National Museums of Scotland and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

The discovery alarmed both museums. Experts at the V & A rushed out to Madrid when they heard the news. And Richard Cook, its specialist conservator, travelled back with the sculpture to Edinburgh in a truck to monitor its condition. But the museum does not rule out the possibility that the crack may have always been present.

The disclosure could revive the debate about the risks of



Fault: hairline crack found after sculpture moved

overseas lending, which last surfaced in Scotland when the Burrell Collection trustees in Glasgow unsuccessfully challenged a move by Glasgow museum officials to change the terms of that bequest to enable the collection to be shown overseas.

The Three Graces, commissioned from the Italian Antonio Canova by the Duke of Bedford at the start of the 19th century, has been the pride of the National Galleries for Scotland since its purchase in 1995.

A spokeswoman for the galleries said yesterday: "Detailed examinations of the statue in Edinburgh revealed that no

DAILY POEM

We were separated

By Sophia de Mello Breyner (translated by Richard Zenith)

We were separated by zithers and song
And by syllabled verses of long poems
And between us two lay landscapes
That kept us immobile and distant

Despite the secret fire of words
And the fierceness of the song and images
Despite the passion of starlit nights
And the mist that grazed our faces

We were separated by zithers and song
Like others by prisons and swords

This poem comes from *Log Book*: selected poems by the leading Portuguese poet Sophia de Mello Breyner. Born in Oporto in 1919, she has published 12 volumes of verse, children's books and translations of Dante and Shakespeare. *Log Book* is published by Carcanet Press (£8.95).

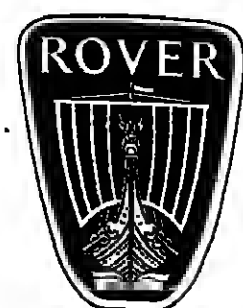


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Brilliant of hope: Military delegates at the opening of the National People's Congress in Peking

Photograph: AP

Blair warns Indonesia to stick with IMF plan

By Richard Lloyd Parry

BRITAIN yesterday warned Indonesia not to abandon an internationally sponsored rescue plan, amid growing tension between Europe and Asia over ways to solve the economic crisis in the Far East.

In a meeting in Jakarta with President Suharto, the foreign office minister, Derek Fatchett, delivered a letter from Tony Blair warning the President that an agreement with the International Monetary Fund for \$60bn (£37.5bn) of emergency funds in return for economic reforms was "not negotiable".

But Asian governments are impatient of what they see as Europe's feeble response to the region's currency crisis, compared to the reaction of the United States and Japan. "European countries have been free-riders on Asia's economic success, but



President Suharto: Urged to accept IMF terms

unwilling to share responsibility for helping it out," said Mikio Kiyoi, of the Japanese foreign ministry, in a letter to *Financial Times* this week.

The row between Europe and Asia threatens to spill over into next month's Asia-Europe

Meeting (Asem), to be hosted in London by the Prime Minister.

The summit, which will be attended by EU heads of government and 10 Asian countries, is the second meeting of its kind. It comes when European governments are trying to improve their relatively weak ties with a region still dominated by the US. But the Asian crisis, caused by the near collapse of the region's currencies, has raised the stakes dangerously high. "There's been an exchange of accusations between the two regions," said one Western official.

Mr Fatchett is the latest in a string of international visitors to urge General Suharto to accept the IMF terms. "The President said to me that they were committed to the programme and I hope that is the case," he said. However, the authority of European pronouncements is compromised by what Asian

governments see as their inadequate response to the crisis. Japan contributed \$19bn to the IMF rescue of Thailand, Indonesia and Korea, and the US gave \$8bn. Eight European countries have collectively given just \$6.25bn. At the same time, the EU and the US have criticised Japan for not doing more to reinvigorate its stagnant economy to stimulate Asia as a whole.

European officials insist they are taking action. Britain has promised £5m towards an Asem Trust Fund providing technical advice on restructuring the stricken economies in conjunction with the World Bank. Brussels fears a wave of Asian exports, whose prices have dropped as a result of the collapse of Far Eastern currencies, flooding their markets and driving European firms out of business.

China's PM admits to his past errors

LI PENG signed off as China's prime minister yesterday with a blunt admission of "shortcomings and defects" in the government, but he also forecast that the economy could grow at 8 per cent this year despite a decrepit state enterprise sector, writes Teresa Poole in Peking.

He also admitted China could "learn a lesson" from the economic crises in neighbouring countries.

Mr Li's report on the state of the nation opened the National People's Congress (NPC), China's annual parliament. Mr Li - controversially - has secured his post as chairman of

the NPC, while the new prime minister will be Zhu Rongji, at present the deputy prime minister in charge of the economy.

Mr Li said: "Bureaucratic behaviour divorced from the needs of the masses and proneness to boasting and exaggerations divorced from reality are serious problems," he said, without explaining why repeated attempts to beat official corruption have failed.

Economic growth, he stated, will fall from 8.8 per cent in 1997 to 8 per cent, and infrastructure investment is planned to offset a fall in foreign investment and slower export growth.

Indian Spice too hot for Hindu puritans

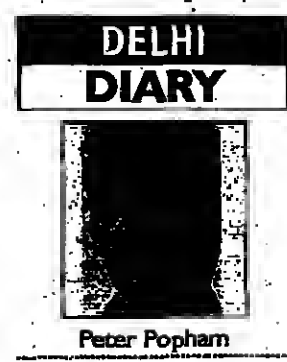
BRITISH readers are probably fed up with the Spice Girls, but in India, where five sightings have so far been confined to one satellite television award presentation in Delhi, people can't get enough of them. That's the only explanation for the flurry of hysterical articles about the girl band that has filled the papers here over the past couple of weeks.

The gist of the articles was, a) the Spice Girls have been signed up to do a concert in front of the famous erotic temples in Khajuraho, central India, in November, and, b) This is a very Bad Thing and should be stopped. Now it appears it was all a sort of mass hallucination: no one has been able to dig up a smidgen of evidence to back the story.

The rumour seems to have been started by a classical Indian dancer called Geeta Chandran who read about the event, or imagined that she did, in a tabloid newspaper, and was so overcome with rage that she wrote to the local authority denouncing the project. "By making those temples an erotic prop for their performance," she fumed, "the Spice Girls would be hurting the sentiments of centuries and centuries of sacred creativity in India."

The temples, with their voluptuous sculptures, could surely withstand a temporary appropriation by a bubblegum pop group. More threatening are Hindu neopuritans like Ms Chandra and the local MP, a Hindu nun called Uma Bharti, who declared: "If the Spice Girls come here wearing short skirts I will not even let them land at the airport."

This week the Hindu puritans came a major step closer to power when the BJP and their allies got within 20 seats of winning a majority in parliament. When their political opponents describe the BJP as "fascist" it may sound like a cheap jibe, but it is historically sound. There were close links between the Hindu nationalist movement and European fascists in the Thirties, and a guru of the movement wrote in 1939: "To keep up the purity of the Race and its culture, Germany shocked the world by purging the



Peter Popham

country of ... the Jews ... a good lesson for us ... to learn and profit by." The anti-Muslim street violence of nationalists in Ayodhya and Bombay shows they have not lost touch with their roots, and one hopes that in government the BJP will be too hamstrung by their coalition partners to behave like good fascists.

A couple of hundred kilometres up the road from Khajuraho is the former princely state of Gwalior, dominated by a massive sandstone escarpment 300ft high. "The peak among the fortresses of Hind" as Babur, the first Mogul emperor, described it.

The fort looks unassailable, but on one occasion a small force did succeed in scaling its walls. I learned this from the Maharaja of Gwalior himself, Madhavrao Scindia, the sitting MP, a Congress leader and possible future prime minister. Last week when he was out campaigning for re-election I talked my way into his Ambassador and presented my card. He did a double take. "The only person in history who ever stormed Gwalior Fort was a Major Popham," he told me. "Are you by any chance related?"

This, I surmised, must have been my old Uncle William who with Warren Hastings cut a bloody swathe through central India in the 1770s. In 1780, with a force of 30 men, Popham somehow scaled the sheer walls and sent the inhabitants packing. These included Mr Scindia's ancestor, Mahadji Scindia.

After an introduction like this I felt obliged to give Mr Scindia a very hard time about the disgusting state of his constituency, and I was lucky not to be thrown out of the car.

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Clinton admits further intimacies with Monica Lewinsky

By Mary Dejevsky
in Washington

PRESIDENT Clinton admitted exchanging gifts with Monica Lewinsky, the White House press secretary, and said he may have had sex with her in his office on as many as five occasions. He admitted taking an interest in her subsequent

search for a job in the private sector, but denied he had initiated the effort to find her employment. He also denied categorically having a sexual relationship with her.

These details, which augment and confirm information already made public about the still-unclear relationship between Mr Clinton and Ms

Lewinsky, were printed by the *Washington Post* yesterday.

It was the most authoritative account yet of sworn testimony given by Mr Clinton in January. He had been summoned to answer questions in the sexual harassment case brought by Paula Jones, the former government worker from Arkansas, who says she was propositioned by

Mr Clinton in a hotel room in 1991.

The videotaped interrogation lasted for more than six hours and can be brought as evidence if the case comes to court, as scheduled, on 27 May. One detail reported by the *Post* was a written definition of sexual relations set out by Paula Jones's legal team. This includes

fondling and oral sex, but not kissing on the lips, and leaves Mr Clinton little room to modify his denial of an affair with Ms Lewinsky without laying himself open to the charge of perjury. A news report last weekend suggested that Mr Clinton might be prepared to admit kissing Ms Lewinsky, but nothing more.

According to the *Post*, which said it had obtained a partial transcript of Mr Clinton's 17 January deposition, much of the questioning related to Ms Lewinsky. Allegations that Mr Clinton had an affair with her and put pressure on her to lie about it are the subject of a separate, criminal, investigation conducted by the independent prosecutor, Kenneth Starr. Ms

Lewinsky's name first emerged in connection with the Paula Jones case. Ms Jones's lawyers have been trying to establish a "pattern of behaviour" by Mr Clinton and have sought out other women who may have been propositioned by him.

The White House and Mr Clinton's lawyers denied leaking the information about Mr

Clinton's testimony that appeared in yesterday's *Post*, but no one denied the account was genuine. The extent of detail - which included a description of the President speaking so softly that he was repeatedly asked to speak up, and occasional flashes of anger about the course of questioning, left little doubt about its authenticity.

US opens door to 51st state - Puerto Rico

By Phil Davison
Latin America Correspondent

ONE HUNDRED years after the United States captured it from Spain, the Spanish-speaking Caribbean island of Puerto Rico may be set to become the 51st state of the United States.

By the narrowest of votes late on Wednesday night, the US House of Representatives gave the go-ahead for the island's 3.8 million people to decide whether they want statehood, independence or a continuation of "US commonwealth" status - effectively as a US colony.

Since polls suggest less than 5 per cent of islanders want to go it alone - they currently have US citizenship and rely almost totally on trade and other ties with the US - the referendum would probably be close between those who want statehood and those who prefer the status quo.

Although the House bill proposed a referendum this year, it first requires a further vote in the Senate. This seems unlikely before the end of 1998. And even if the referendum were to go in favour of statehood, it could take 10 years for the transition to be made and the extra 51st star to be added to the Stars and Stripes flag.

Puerto Ricans reacted cautiously to the heated 12-hour House debate on television, culminating in a 209-208 vote. The statehood issue has split the island and most are

wary of decisions taken in the US, where islanders cannot vote. They have no voting representatives in the US Congress and do not pay federal taxes either, though they are subject to the US military draft.

The independence question led to violence on the island in the Fifties. Puerto Rican independence militants opened fire in the US House of Representatives in 1954, wounding five congressmen. Four years earlier, Puerto Rican nationalists had tried, unsuccessfully, to kill President Harry Truman.

Many islanders were upset by this week's debate, when the right-wing Republican congressmen tried to push through an amendment that would have made English Puerto Rico's only official language. Most Puerto Ricans speak only Spanish and less than a quarter are bilingual.

Squeezed between the island of Hispaniola to the west and the former British and other Caribbean islands to the east, the majority of Puerto Ricans accept they could not live without American aid. The island receives \$10bn (£6bn) from the US budget each year, which may rise to \$14bn if it becomes a state.

In a non-binding plebiscite five years ago, more than 48 per cent of islanders voted for the status quo, more than 46 per cent for statehood and about 4 per cent for independence. Under the terms of the House bill, a simple majority of over 50 per cent would be necessary.



On the move: A new Pennsylvania Station is to emerge from beneath the hubbub of New York's General Post Office

Photograph: Jon Levy

New York's Penn station rises again from the rubble

By David Usborne
in New York

FEW acts of urban vandalism equalled the razing of Pennsylvania Station, a neo-classical masterpiece, in Manhattan 35 years ago. The city has been feeling the guilt ever since. Now, it is seizing a chance to make amends.

The old Penn Station is gone for good. Chunks still lie among the rushes in marshland across the Hudson River in New Jersey. What passes as Penn Station today is a low-ceilinged, subterranean warren beneath Madison Square Garden. It was to make way for the Garden that the old Penn was demolished.

Across Eighth Avenue from the Garden, however, is New York's General Post Office Building. A splendid structure of sweeping steps and marching columns, it evokes the Station that is no more. It should, both buildings were designed by the venerated architectural team of McKim,

Meade and White. After years of prodding, the Post Office this week agreed to surrender a large part of its facility for - guess what - a new, and newly grandiose Pennsylvania Station. Construction will begin this summer.

What should emerge will be a fine terminus with restaurants and shops. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a prime mover behind the project, said the decision was "an epochal moment, a turning point" for the city.

President Bill Clinton is also impressed; he helped, by twisting the arm of the Post Office. What he saw was a "vision to build

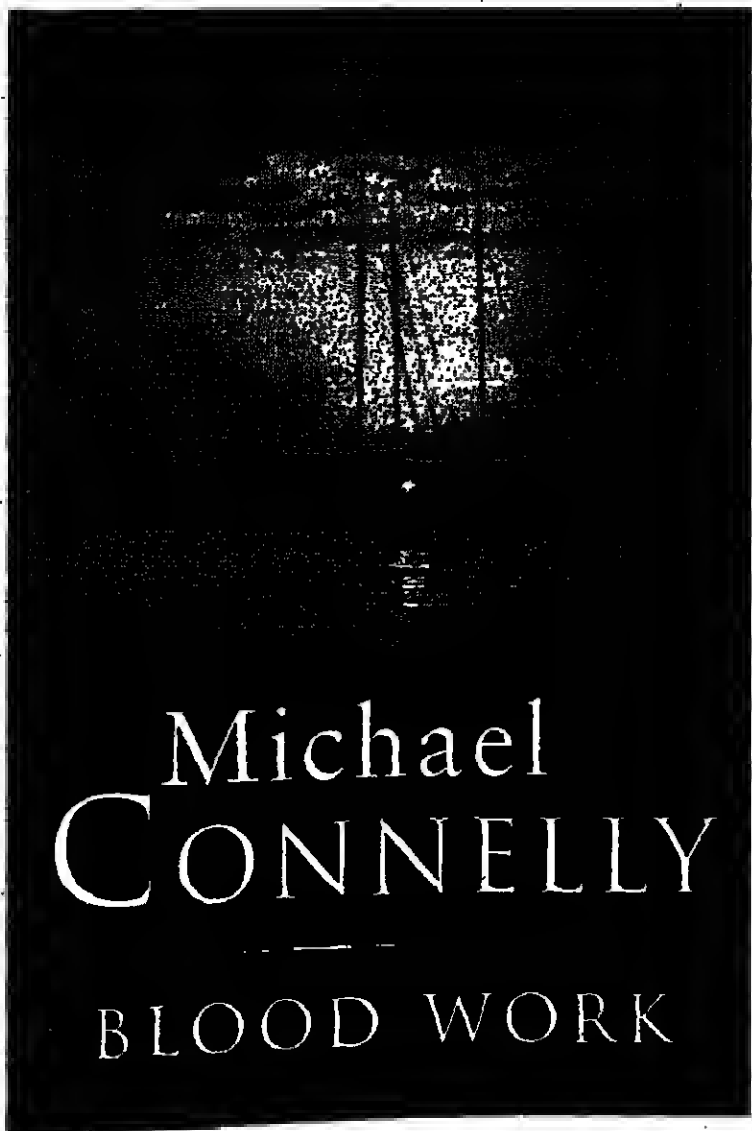
a new, beautiful railway station, worthy of the future, and worthy of New York City". It is budgeted to cost some \$315m.

For the engineers, one detail is crucial. The lines coming into the existing Penn Station pass directly beneath the Post Office building. All that will be needed, therefore, will be escalators from the grand new lobby feeding down to the lines below.

Getting to this point has not been easy. For six years, the Post Office held out, arguing that it needed all of its space. Finally, it agreed to hand over about one-fifth of its floor area to the railways. Eventually the Post Office may be chased out altogether.

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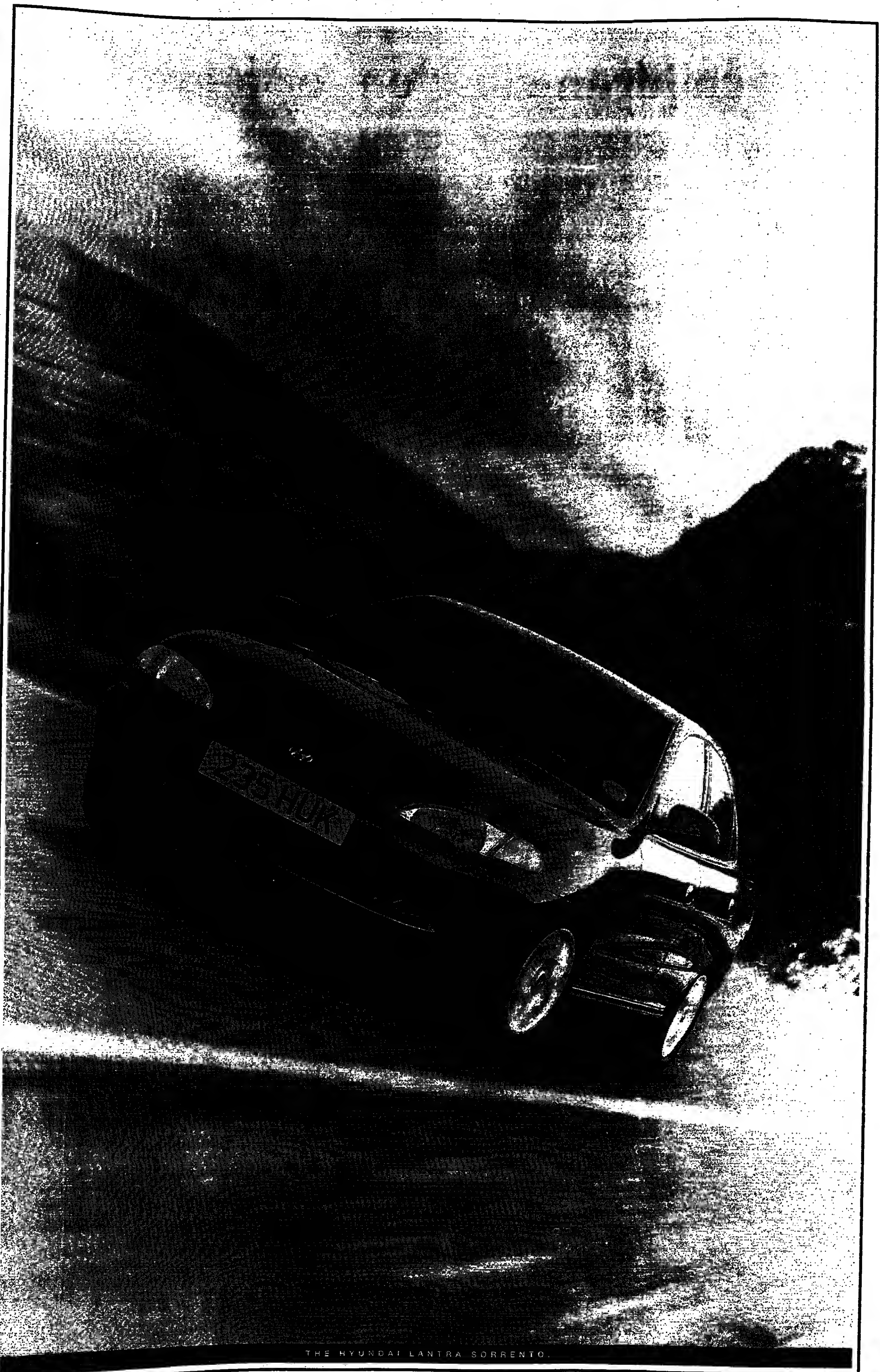
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Iraq's children cling on for a grim life

The in-tray that holds horrors of deprivation

By Robert Fisk
in Baghdad

A VISIT to Philippe Heffnick's office is a grim business. Not because of the feral children prowling through the garbage round the corner. Certainly not because there's anything wrong with the UNICEF office in Baghdad, a block of former apartments whose soft carpeting and subdued telephone bells could be a government department in Mr Heffnick's native Belgium. Coffee is served piping hot, with plenty of milk and sugar.

Even the files on Mr Heffnick's desk have about them an amorphous quality. "The 1996 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey" doesn't indicate much pain. "Nutritional Status Sur-

You become stunted. There is a lack of physical and mental growth that will afflict the child - his schooling, his job opportunities, his chances of founding a family and quite possibly his or her offspring as well."

All this was said with the curt politeness of a civil servant, of a UN bureaucrat going through his statistics. And one could not but reflect on what this represents. While the UN inspectors are neutering Iraq's weapons programme - and with good reason - the same organisation is imposing sanctions that are crippling the country's children. Of course, Saddam is to blame - Saddam is always to blame. But it is we who are imposing the economic blockade on Iraq, and it is Mr Heffnick - on our behalf - who is drawing up these dreadful statistics.

"People think," he goes on, "that with more food and medicine, things are going to work better. But the quantity of available water has decreased by 50 per cent and the quality of water has deteriorated in some Iraqi governorates to 35 per cent contamination. Because it's not just the water-treatment plants that need repairing in Iraq but the pipes as well. Then you have the lack of electricity that contributes to the deterioration in health."

I already understood the revolting mechanics of electrical power and water; a UN hygiene official had explained it to me, equally coldly, 24 hours earlier, when electricity is cut - which it is every three hours, for example, in Basra - the pumps stop and the pressure in the leaking water pipes falls. Into the vacuum is sucked sewage which runs out of the taps. Even the original source of the water is now contaminated in Iraq.

"There should be 5,000 tons of garbage collected in Baghdad every day," Mr Heffnick says. "But the capacity available is only 3,500 tons - because sewage treatment plants are not functioning properly. So very often the overspill is dropped in the river - from which water is pumped for drinking. In Baghdad, only 30 per cent of the population is connected with a sewage system

the big majority use septic tanks which don't work well in a shallow water-table like this. "But now many mechanical septic-tank emitters are not working due to lack of spare parts. So people are forced to empty their tanks into the drains; and this is one cause of diarrhoea diseases and typhoid fevers among children. "You have a lack of electricity, a lack of clean water and a lack of environmental sanitation: the relationship between these three is a deadly combination."



A young girl leans out of a slum window in the Dour Sheoun area of Basra

Photograph: Robert Fisk

Those files on Mr Heffnick's desk with their white covers tell the story with great clarity. A child who is malnourished cannot fight diseases; thus the large increase in the number of diarrhoea cases - on average, every child in Iraq suffers 3-15 episodes of diarrhoea each year. But in the past, a child entering hospital with diarrhoea had only a one in 600 chance of dying. Now one in 50 children are dying from curable diarrhoea. The statistics seem endless. Cereal production has fallen

from 3.5 million tons to 2.2 million, contributing to child malnutrition, which in turn leads to disease and poor school attendance. Every child between six and 11 used to attend school. Now only 63 per cent of that figure turns up for class."

Mr Heffnick is not a man to make comparisons, but it doesn't take long to work out the implications of his figures. The 1.1 million children with chronic malnutrition, the 330,000 with acute malnutrition, the kwashiorkor cases turning up

in their hundreds in Iraq's hospitals: the degree of malnutrition in Iraq is about equal to that of Zaire.

But the explosion in child cancer that has followed the 1991 Gulf War is a subject about which Mr Heffnick and his colleagues refuse to make any comment, even though they admit they have heard talk of depleted uranium shells causing leukemia. And not once does child cancer feature in those white files.

Now isn't that an odd fact?

Cook initiative to push Europe into Middle East process

By Rupert Cornwell

BRITAIN is launching what looks an uphill attempt to propel Europe to centre stage in the Middle East, with initiatives to revive the moribund Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and to speed up the expanded United Nations oil-for-food programme for Iraq.

In a speech to the Anglo-Arab Association, Robin Cook set out the six steps Britain believes essential if the peace process is to be revived. They include a halt to new Israeli settlements, a fresh commitment to security by the Palestinians, "substantial, credible and urgent" troop redeployments by Israel, and measures to boost the Palestinian economy.

Although the Foreign Office denies it, the onus is placed clearly on the Israeli side, and the settlements demand in particular has already been flatly rejected by the Government of Benjamin Netanyahu. "Europeans know nothing about the Middle East," Mr Netanyahu was quoted as saying on the eve of his arrival in Spain yesterday, to start a four day European tour to win support for his uncompromising stance.

In his own coded criticism of Mr Netanyahu - who meets Tony Blair in London at the weekend - the Foreign Secretary last night invoked not the

Israeli Prime Minister but the Israeli people. They knew that lasting security without peace was impossible, Mr Cook declared. "They want the peace process to go forward, they share the world's concern about the current stalemate."

Mr Cook pays his first visit to the region later this month, visiting the six countries most closely involved in the Arab-Israeli dispute, including Israel, Syria, Jordan and the Occupied Territories while in April Mr Blair will make a trip to the Middle East.

Foreign Office officials last night stressed the speech contained "no anti-Israeli elements whatsoever," but in tone it seemed designed to redress the balance after Britain's threats to use force against Iraq.

Mr Cook laid explicit stress on the "light at the end of the tunnel" for the Iraqi people, if Saddam complied with UN resolutions. He said Britain was convening an EU conference to help direct proceeds of the oil-for-food programme quickly and efficiently to the intended recipients.

JERUSALEM (Reuters) - Israel's attorney-general, Elyakim Rubinstein, said he had met officials in Switzerland yesterday to seek the release of a Mossad agent caught in an alleged bugging attempt that embarrassed the spy service.

Academics condemn the effect of sanctions on health and education

The sanctions on Iraq are severely damaging its education system and cultural heritage, according to academics and researchers, writes Kim Sengupta. Among the items on the UN blacklist are pencils, science books and computer software. And, while the sanctions are hindering the educational prospects of the young, archaeological treasures are being smuggled to collectors in the West.

Academics from Cambridge and Oxford have written to the *Independent* expressing concern about the effect of sanctions on civilians, which, they say, are "counter-productive and indefensible".

"Allowing the people of Iraq to suffer malnutrition and poor

health is like refusing food and medicine to the passengers in a hijacked plane."

The Labour MP George Galloway, who has been campaigning against non-military sanctions, yesterday hosted a press conference by experts who have first-hand experience of Iraq to "counter government propaganda". Haris Gazdar, a London School of Economics researcher, said the average income of an Iraqi had fallen from around £150 a month before the Gulf war to around £3 a month now. The country, whose national income was comparable with that of South Korea and Brazil before the war, is now on a lower level than Bangladesh.

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Suicide bus bomb kills 32 in Colombo

A BUS laden with shrapnel-packed bombs raced into the capital's crowded business district and exploded, killing at least 32 people and wounding more than 300. Suspicion fell on guerrillas of the nation's Tamil minority. The bus, empty of all but the driver, blew apart outside a train station, ripping the fronts off buildings and shredding dozens of vehicles. The dead included at least three children from schools in the area and two police officers.

— AP, Colombo

Lesbian pardoned

President Emil Constantinescu of Romania pardoned a lesbian imprisoned under a code which still considers homosexuality a crime. *Adevartul* newspaper printed a list of presidential pardons, including one for Marina Cetiner, who completed two years of a three-year jail sentence for "luring another woman into sexual intercourse".

— Reuters, Bucharest

Custody ruling

The Hungarian-born porn star Ilona Staller, known as "Ciociolina", has lost custody of her five-year-old son to her ex-husband, the sculptor Jeff Koons, after an Italian court ruled she was an unfit mother.

— Reuters, Rome

French inquiry into genocide role

By John Lichfield
in Paris

The French parliament is to investigate charges that France, in effect, condoned the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. The National Assembly's Defence Committee has created a mission d'information, or study group, not the full-blown public committee of inquiry which critics of French policy have demanded. *Médecins Sans Frontières*, the French humanitarian organisation, rejected the decision as a "diversionary tactic".

Evidence has emerged that France supplied political support and weapons to the former Hutu regime in Rwanda while the massacres of about 800,000 Tutsis in the spring and summer of 1994 were under way. It is also suggested that in the months before the massacres, French military training missions in Rwanda turned a blind eye to evidence that genocide was planned.

The re-examination of France's role follows the publication of a 1,000-page report by a Belgian parliamentary committee and investigative articles in *Le Figaro*. France has refused to co-operate with the international war crimes investigation of the genocide, ordering military officers not to give evidence.

Recently, there has been a clamour from Green and Communist members of Par-

liament for a thorough, public committee of inquiry. The chairman of the Defence Committee, former defence minister Paul Quilès, has instead won an agreement that 10 or 12 deputies should form a study group. Critics say such a group will meet in secret and may never make public its findings.

Mr Quilès says that it is "not impossible" the report will be published. He insists it is vital that the group works "in serenity" (ie out of the eye of the media). A full inquiry would be constitutionally impossible, he claims, while the war crimes tribunal is under way. This is a dubious assertion. It might have been true if France, or French personnel, were not a trial, but they are not.

The central allegation against France is that the late president François Mitterrand became obsessed with the need to prop up the French-speaking Hutu regime in Kigali and defeat the English-speaking Tutsi rebels, long exiled in Uganda. The Hutus were seen as a vital bulwark against the spread of US influence and the English language in South Central Africa. According to *Le Figaro*, France exported arms to the Hutus in the summer of 1994, even though massacres of Tutsis were proceeding on an epic scale. The newspaper quoted President Mitterrand as saying: "In countries like that, genocide is not so important."

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Catholic with a small 'c'

Is the Prime Minister turning to Rome? John Rentoul, his biographer, thinks not – yet. But thousands of others are doing so. One recent convert explains why

FOR someone who "can't stand politicians who wear God on their sleeves", the Prime Minister's religious belief is surprisingly central to people's perceptions of him. Of the small number of personal facts about Tony Blair of which most voters are aware, that he is a devout Christian is one of the best known.

Inevitably, his religious affiliation has become public property, the subject of debate and opinionated assertion. The fact that he is nominally an Anglican and yet attends Roman Catholic Mass with his Roman Catholic wife and children has been taken as a licence to draw conclusions on his behalf.

Now the conversion story has been given another twist, because Mr Blair has continued to do as Prime Minister what he did before the election, namely to go to church, and he has also been seen attending Mass alone. It seems strange to some people that he attends both Anglican and Roman Catholic churches, but to the Blair's friends there is a simple explanation as to why the Prime Minister has attended Mass by himself. Since moving to Downing Street, it has become tradition for the family to attend Mass at Westminster Cathedral; when alone, Mr Blair simply maintains the tradition.

This is not enough for some observers. He goes to Mass? says Cardinal Thomas Winning, head of the Catholic church in Scotland. Then he must be against abortion. Well, he does not exactly rejoice in it, but no, he does not think it would help to criminalise it. He goes to Mass? cries Catholic convert Paul Johnson. Then he must be on the road to Rome. It does not follow. Others authoritatively declare Mr Blair a "High" Anglican or an Anglo-Catholic, as if these were simple and unambiguous terms.

His eagerness to get to a church on Sundays when he is travelling – and his indifference as between C of E and RC – has long been a cause of the quizzically-raised atheistic eyebrow among the changing cast of minders and friends around him.

Of course, there is more to Mr Blair's religion than the outward observances. The trouble is that his reluctance to talk about his faith invites others to interpret it for him. As his biographer, I can confirm that his religion is private. He does not talk about it unless asked, and then he is brief and matter-of-fact. What is more, most of the Blair's friends say they have never discussed religion with either of them.

But for all his reticence, he has made two substantial theological statements in public, and we do know about how he came to call himself a Christian and how it relates to his political life.

It is significant, for example, that he was not brought up in the Church of England, except in the formal sense at school (and his public school was half Church of Scotland). His father is an atheist and, though his mother was a believer, the family did not go to church. So, unlike Cherie, his church is not part of his family identity; like his party, he chose it, at the age of 20.

Cherie Blair's faith is fundamental to her life. Although her own mother, Gale, was not a Catholic and her absent actor father, Tony Booth, was lapsed, she was brought up in the faith because she lived in the Liverpool house of her Catholic paternal grandmother and attended Catholic schools. She has never said anything about her beliefs, but while clearly being devout, it is thought she is a liberal Catholic. She did not insist, for example, on marriage in a Catholic church, and while their sons go to the traditional Oratory school, their daughter, Kathryn, is expected to join a Church of England secondary school next year.

Before he met his wife, the formative influences on Blair's faith were twofold, a person and a philosophy. Peter Thomson, an earthy, anti-establishment Australian cleric, was a postgraduate student at Oxford, who introduced Blair to the writings of John Macmurray, a Scottish thinker who had fallen out of favour as he was neither a philosopher (because he was not interested in linguistics) nor a theologian (because he rarely mentioned God).

Both influences point towards a radical ecumenism at odds with the idea that Blair



Tony and Cherie Blair after attending Catholic Mass with Rt Rev Cormac Murphy O'Connor in Brighton during the Labour Party Conference

might sign up as a Roman Catholic. Macmurray, who left a deep imprint on Blair through the idea of community, ended his life in the Society of Friends (the Quakers). Meanwhile Thomson, who returned to Britain in order to share in the excitement of his protégé's election victory, gave a lecture in honour of R.H. Tawney on how the institutions of the church have gone horribly wrong since Jesus's time.

This emphasis on the personality of Jesus is shared by Blair, who wrote a foreword to a collection of Christian socialist essays in 1993. This declared that: "Christianity is a very tough religion... It is judgmental. There is right and wrong. There is good and bad." But this is not toughness in a doctrinaire sense. It was a call to social action, an injunction to "look at our world today" and see "how much needs to be done".

Then, in Easter 1996, Blair gave a long interview to the *Sunday Telegraph* about his beliefs. He talked about the three parts of the Easter message: Pontius Pilate, deciding what to do with Jesus; Peter, "the rock of Christ", who denied him in weakness; and "Christ himself in the Garden of Gethsemane" suffering the very human agony and saying, "not my will, but thine, be done".

There are many Roman Catholics who would share the radical social message, and even this direct and personal relationship with the New Testament, but it seems to me that everything Blair says about religion – in parallel with his political message – speaks of inclusiveness.

In his *Sunday Telegraph* interview, he went on: "I am an ecumenical Christian. I find many of the angry debates between Catholic and Protestant completely baffling." To spurn one designation in favour of another would surely be to add fuel to precisely those angry debates. But there are still many in the Catholic hierarchy who think that it is only a matter of time. Of course, they say, Blair would not convert while he was Prime Minister. That, at least, would certainly fit with everything we know about Blair the politician, as much as Blair the theologian.

It would be disastrous in the context of the Northern Ireland peace talks. Blair has in the past gone out of his way to claim both Protestant and Catholic roots to his family tree, while his marriage is itself an important symbol of inter-denominational unity. But he also takes a closer interest in Church of England affairs than any of his recent predecessors, becoming the first prime minister to block the appointment of a bishop since the present system was established 21 years ago.

There are those close to Cardinal Basil Hume, leader of the Catholic church in Britain, who suggest that he and Blair have discussed the possibility of conversion, but agreed that the idea should be put "on hold" until he ceases to be Prime Minister.

Blair has certainly met Cardinal Hume, and they have discussed matters of faith. But their first communications were rather spiky. Some time after Blair became Labour leader, there was a new priest at his and Cherie's parish church in Islington. Whereas the previous incumbent, a liberal,

took a relaxed view of Blair's taking communion, the new man objected. For conservative Catholics, it is distressing that anybody who does not accept in theory and in practice the authority of the Church should receive the sacrament. (In fact, this rule is widely flouted in the case of second marriages, because there is another rule that says communion should not be refused if this would cause a scandal.)

There was a flurry, which went up as high as Cardinal Hume, and Blair agreed not to take communion any more.

Since becoming Prime Minister, the two have met often. But the idea that they have discussed – let alone agreed – a delayed conversion must owe more to Catholic wish-fulfilment and Blair's uncanny ability to persuade anyone that he is on their side, than to any firm intentions the Prime Minister has expressed.

Despite his professed reticence, Blair has said enough about his beliefs for us to know that he is – as in politics – a catholic with a small "c".

IF TONY BLAIR had attended Westminster Cathedral last Sunday, he would not have stood out from the crowd. The Roman Catholic cathedral was packed with people who were not members of the Holy Mother Church. But these were people who would soon belong, and had come to the cathedral for a special ceremony to mark their Lenten preparation for conversion to the faith. On Easter Saturday, the 800 prospective converts attending the cathedral will be received into the Catholic church at midnight vigils across London.

Since 1981, more than 80,000 people in Britain have converted to Rome. The Catholic Church, with its declining attendances and falling birth count, needs them badly. They are often more committed and more intense about their faith than cradle Catholics, for conversion requires an intense effort, both emotional and spiritual. Many of those who met Cardinal Hume last Sunday were in tears, such was the impact of coming so close to the moment of total acceptance by the church.

Conversion nowadays usually consists of attending Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults courses, lasting six months to a year.

With fewer priests than ever (despite the recent influx of Anglican priests opposed to women's ordination) much of this work is now done by the laity. For certain people, one-to-one instruction from a priest, such as the Franciscan Father Michael Seed, is available. He guided the politicians John Gummer and Ann Widdecombe.

Why join? Paul Warren, a children's author and illustrator, was received into the church last Easter. Like Mr Blair, his wife was a Catholic and his children had been baptised as Catholics. His eldest son, like Mr Blair's, goes to the Oratory School in Fulham.



Paul Warren and his family on the night he became a Catholic

He says: "As a child of the Sixties I was pretty wild, though I also felt in some vague way that my life must have some purpose. God, perhaps? If so, how could I find Him? Needless to say I took a few short cuts in my search, and over the years I garnered a motley ragbag of mystical ideas."

"It sounds wonderful – I could mix and match. I could practically invent my own religion. But my heart wasn't in it. It just didn't feel right. My belief in God may have deepened, but I wasn't a Taoist, a Navajo or an Aztec. I felt a stranger in a strange land, never fully at home. I was still searching. "And then an odd thing happened. One day, searching through some old family photographs, I came across my C of E baptism certificate. I had no idea – my parents had never been churchgoers – but quite unexpectedly the discovery touched me. It meant something to me, as if a seed, planted all those years ago, had suddenly bloomed. I realised I had come full circle. I had rediscovered my Christian roots."

But what could Mr Warren do about it? "My wife was Roman Catholic and our children were preparing for a Catholic education. The Church of England was going through changes that suggested too many shifting uncertainties. If I was coming home, I didn't want to arrive in the middle of a family row. On the other hand, I found that the Catholic Church was also developing; it too was re-examining its roots and the teaching of the Church fathers. It had looked at many of its medieval accretions and was seeking harmony between the Sacraments and the Word of God. I was also drawn by the Church's reverence for Mary and by the humanity of the saints. It seemed a very human church. It stirred my faith: my head and my heart."

When the cameras stop rolling, dress to please yourselves

The fashion police have felt the frayed collars of two of Britain's best young actors. Melanie Rickey senses a miscarriage of justice

WHEN Helena Bonham Carter boarded Concorde to New York on Wednesday, onlookers were surprised, shocked even, to see her dressed in a mish-mash of most unfilm-starry clothes, with tousled hair and not a hint of make-up.

Where was the cashmere wrap? The sunglasses? The leave-me-alone-I-am-a-movie-star demeanour? It was in exactly the same place as Kate Winslet's leave-me-alone-I-am-a-movie-star demeanour when she boarded Concorde last week wearing a mini-skirt with bare legs, boots, chunky socks and a black leather coat; put away until Oscar night on 23 March, when both women will look every inch glamorous icons of the silver screen.

The truth is that today's young actresses are an entirely different breed of women from the Marilyn Monroe, Ava Gardner and Lauren



Kate Winslet off-duty and at the Baftas; Helena Bonham Carter in baggy jumper and award night gown



Bacall types of the Forties and Fifties. Then, every detail of their clothing, make-up, eyebrows and hairstyles were slavishly copied to such a degree that most fashionable women of that era looked like clones.

In the late Nineties, we've got a diverse selection of supermodels for inspiration, and frankly we would rather look

to Kate (Moss) and Helena (Christensen) for fashion tips, not our lovely actresses Kate and Helena who are all the better for their imperfections and remind us of our humanity.

Unfortunately this doesn't stop the hitching, snipping and deconstruction of their every fashion choice. Bonham Carter doesn't seem to care too much

like that since she was a teenager, no doubt with 50ls and a leather coat – just like other women her age. Why should she wear Manolo Blahnik heels and designer dresses? She is not paid to be a clothes-horse, she is paid to act, and she is very good at it.

Last November, when Helena Bonham Carter was getting primed, preened and laced into a Vivienne Westwood gown for the London premiere of *The Wings of the Dove*, she commented: "I'm dressing up and pretending to be a movie star," and after changing out of her dungarees and trainers, donning the gown, and spending three hours in hair and make-up, she looked sensational, and assumed her part beautifully, just like Kate Winslet did in her Vivienne Westwood gown at last year's Oscar ceremony – and just as they will again on 23 March.

Arms and the woman

For more than 16 years, Jenny Matthews has taken her camera to some of the world's most horrifying conflicts, from the civil wars in Eritrea and Nicaragua to the ethnic bloodbath in Rwanda. As part of International Women's Week, an exhibition of her photographs opens on 10 March at the Brunei Gallery, Russell Square, London



Above: Indira Gandhi Hospital, Kabul, Afghanistan 1996. Tariq picked up something that looked like a pen. It was a landmine. Top left: Eritrea, 1995. At the end of the war, women from all over the country met to discuss a new constitution. Bottom left: After Vietnam. This girl was born in 1991 with no eyes, as a result of the Agent Orange defoliant used by the Americans during the war. Bottom right: A Sandinista soldier, Nicaragua, 1983

Photographs: Jenny Matthews

My first baby was a boy, my second was a book

Writing about the trials and traumas of parenthood is becoming a whole new genre. Good idea – or just good copy, asks Ann Treneman

KATE FIGES has written a book that tells you how horrible it can be to become a mother. "What even your friends won't tell you," cries the cover. And it does. Take her attempts to placate her newborn daughter. "When she cried inconsolably, her walls sounded so accusing, so tormented and so loud that I used to be convinced something seriously was wrong with her and feel rising anger and shame at my inability to calm her."

Every parent in the land can relate to that, but what about Figes' own children? When they grow up and read this will they be touched, appalled or just embarrassed? It's a question that more and more authors should be asking themselves.

Ours has been called the age of autobiography and there is no doubt that publishing is in the grip of a kind of memoir madness. But writing about your own dreadful childhood (which everyone seems to have had) is not the same as writing about your own dreadful children (which nobody likes to admit to having). "It may be difficult to write about your parents but it is far, far harder to write about your children," says Melissa Benn, daughter of Tony and author of a new book on motherhood, *Madonna and Child*. "For starters, you want them to be nice to you for a long time."

True, but editors and publishers aren't bothered by such things as they search for female readers in an age when confession has become the new journalism.

Ms Benn is careful to point out that, in her book, she has written only five pages on what it was like for her to become a mother at age 37 and 260 pages on motherhood in general. Kate Figes, writer and books editor at the *Mail on Sunday's* *You* magazine, makes the same point. "I don't really write about my children. I write about motherhood," she says. "There isn't that much personal stuff in the book. I felt I had to put myself into it but I didn't want to overdo it and it probably makes up 2 per cent." The process of deciding how personal the book should be took time. In the first draft, for instance, she used her children's names and then decided not to. "I just found that to be too personal."

But what about her children reading it? "I did think about that. I think it would be useful and interesting to them. The love is there. That's clear," she says. "I don't know anything about what my own early years were like." But she does know what it is like to have her own life appear in print because her mother, the novelist and feminist Eva, wrote about her.

"I remember one of her articles, I think



it was for *Cosmo*, was on teenage sex and she used me and my friends as case studies. That was an absolute nightmare. I've only just forgiven her!"

She is right to draw a distinction between her book – which is primarily political – and others that are strictly personal. These days we tend to think of the latter in terms of newspaper columns and magazine articles. The March issue of the new women's

glossy *Red*, for instance, managed to have a dad (Tony Parsons) writing about his son and a daughter (Louise France) writing about her dad. No newspaper is complete without at least one mum and dad going on about nappies and school dinners.

Some writers insist that it is okay to write about their children when they are small. "But I would never write about them as teenagers," says Kate Figes. "It is such a

Kate Figes with daughters Eleanor, 8, and Grace, 4. 'I don't really write about my children, I write about motherhood,' she says. In the first draft of her book she used her children's names, but then changed her mind, finding it 'too personal'

tumultuous time," *Times* columnist John Diamond also sees trouble ahead. "The difficulty will come when the kids learn to read properly," he says. "Both of them have been grist to my journalistic mill since they were born and I don't have a problem writing about them. But I'm very conscious of the columnist who wrote about his family and had terrible fallings out because his daughter would find her first period the subject of a jocular column, or his son would have trouble keeping his girlfriends, who would find themselves dissected on the page."

The truth is that when the children get old enough to answer back, the columnists don't stop. But they do at least negotiate first. After all, babies and toddlers demand their rights like a teenager can. Michele Hanson knows all about such things, having written a column in the *Guardian* about her teenage daughter Amy (better known as Treasure) for years. "She asked me not to write about her boyfriends or anything too upsetting or anything to do with periods," says Michele. "So I didn't." At one point, when Amy was 13, she gave her a £10 a week research fee. "I figured I couldn't do it without her, so she got a fee."

Amy, now 19, says she appreciated the extra money and she made her mother promise to never, ever write about sex. She

remembers a few columns that upset her (or, more likely, her friends). "But the thing is that her articles made me feel that she is quite fun really. Wicked."

Now that Treasure is going away to university, Michele has started to write about her own mother. "Grandma reacts much worse than I did," says Amy. "One time she refused to speak to mum for a week." All three are featured in *Motherland*, yet another new book on the subject that is out this week and edited by Ann McFerran.

Katharine Whitehorn says her family got used to the odd mention in the 30-odd years she wrote for the *Observer*. Her son, Bernard Lyall, now 33, says the family always communicated by notes and letters anyway and he saw this as just the rather public equivalent of that. "In fact," says Katharine, "it was the only way I could get my son to move out when he was in his twenties. I wrote a column about how young people never seemed to leave home these days."

Bernard doesn't remember it quite that way but he's pretty relaxed about it all. "I think all's fair in love, war and newspapers. It's just good copy." Now that has the ring of truth, though it's not something that many of today's nappy-happy hacks like to admit. *Life After Birth* is published this week by Viking (£12.99 paperback)

Professor Carlo Dionisotti

CARLO DIONISOTTI, Professor of Italian at Bedford College, London, from 1949 to 1970, was one of the greatest Italian literary historians of his time, indeed, of this century.

He preferred writing articles to writing books. He concentrated first on Renaissance literature, choosing his subjects often with striking originality from areas no one else had previously considered worthy of study. In addition he devoted particular attention to a few individuals - Bembo, Machiavelli and the great printer Aldus Manutius. After his retirement he ranged wider, with a book on 19th-century authors, and several contributions on the historiography of Italian literature.

Dionisotti was born in Turin in 1908 and educated at Turin University, among his fellow students were the novelist Cesare Pavese and the historian Arnaldo Momigliano, a lifelong friend, who was Professor of Ancient History at University College London during most of the time that Dionisotti was at Bedford.

Before and during the Second World War, Dionisotti held minor teaching posts in Italian schools and universities; his lack of advancement was doubtless due to his antagonism to Fascism and his refusal to pay lip-service to any ideology or person.

In 1947, at the suggestion of another Piedmontese, A. Passerin d'Entreves, who was Professor of Italian at Oxford, he obtained a post there as Lecturer in Italian; two years later he moved to Bedford as Professor. Over the next two decades his scholarly reputation grew rapidly, but he remained at Bedford for the rest of his career.

One of his reasons for staying in Britain was that he had become used to working in the Italian collections of the British Library, one of the richest, and one of the best catalogued, in the world. Dionisotti once described the philosopher and historian Benedetto Croce as 'to my knowledge, the most formidable reader and interpreter of Italian texts since the 18th century'. These words could well be applied to Dionisotti himself.

The roots of his fundamental contribution to the historiography of Italian literature lay in his profound knowledge,

particularly of Renaissance texts, in the vast reading on which his opinions had been formed. In a famous article on clergy and laity in Italian literature in the first half of the 16th century, he based his arguments on an analysis of 100 authors, remarking, without a trace of irony, that this number was probably sufficient to represent the conditions of the period. No other modern Italianist could match that sort of knowledge.

The main conclusion to which his omnivorous and close reading of Italian literature led him was summed up in the title of his inaugural lecture at Bedford, "Geografia e storia della letteratura italiana" ("Geography and History of Italian literature"). This later became the title of his most important collection of essays, published in 1967. His thesis, obvious, like all major theoretical advances, once it had been expressed, was that before (and even to some

regional and extra-regional influences which it was the job of the literary historian to elucidate.

This concept is now firmly established in Italian literary historiography. It is interesting that Dionisotti's position has seemed equally acceptable to historians of every colour - clerical, anti-clerical, Marxist, New Historicist. To some extent, this is due to four: it is dangerous publicly to disagree with someone whom you suspect knows more about your subject than you do. But his contributions were based on such rock-solid evidence they transcend ideology.

Another reason for Dionisotti's hold on his fellow scholars was the quality of his writing. Most academics are happy to achieve clarity, but his articles have a sinewy vigour which matches the forcefulness of his thought, full of felicities of concept and expression. It is no surprise that his academic writings won him the rare accolade of a literary award, the Premio Viareggio (1989).

After his retirement Dionisotti visited Italy regularly and frequently, extending the impact of his writings by the brio and vigour of his seminars and lectures. These were particularly appreciated by the younger generation of scholars, and will ensure the continuation of his influence for years to come.

Towards scholars in whom he thought he detected sloppiness or pretentiousness Dionisotti could be savage. But for students and colleagues he was a delightful teacher and companion, vivacious, witty, well-informed about current affairs, full of interest in their concerns. For me, and for many others, he was a career-long source of inspiration. While we could not match his erudition, nor the incisiveness of his thought, we could at least learn from his integrity, and from the humility with which he approached the writers of the past.

Conor Fahy

Carlo Dionisotti-Casalone, Italian scholar, born Turin 9 June 1908; Lecturer in Italian, Oxford University 1947-49; Professor of Italian, Bedford College 1949-70 (Emeritus); FBA 1972; married 1942 Maria Pina-Pinto (three daughters, one daughter deceased); died London 22 February 1998.



Dionisotti: sinewy vigour



Pawar: playing the mother-in-law to perfection

Photograph: Hyphen Films

Lalita Pawar

LALITA PAWAR played the sly, scheming and vindictive mother-in-law to perfection in scores of Indian films in an acting career that spanned nearly 60 years in Bollywood, India's film capital city of Bombay.

The more pronounced her sly and scheming matters became for the heroine whose hateful mother-in-law she played in most of the 600 films in which she featured; this after years as a heroine who personally performed daredevil stunts in numerous silent films.

Pawar played the beloved mother and domineering dowager with equal aplomb, earning kudos and awards from the late 1940s until six years ago, when failing health and sight forced her to retire to the western Indian city of Pune, 120 miles from her beloved Bombay.

A resounding slap on the cheek, delivered by the hero during shooting, cut short Pawar's career as a heroine. The blow burst a nerve near her eye leading to partial facial paralysis and a permanent limp.

It took her three years to recover, but instead of wallowing in self-pity she used the accident to advantage, to become a character actress who breathed life into whatever role she was cast.

Born into a middle-class family in the central Indian city of Indore in 1914, she moved, with her parents to Pune. Having made a name for herself as a heroine who could perform her own stunts she changed her name to Lalita and in the 1930s acted in a series of successful daredevil silent films like *Himmat-e-Mard* ("A Brave

Man"), *Chevrolet* and *Captain Kishore*.

In the mid-1930s she married Ganpatrao Pawar, a film-maker from Bombay and acted in his movies, but the union ended in divorce as he took a fancy to her younger sister. She later married Raj Kumar Gupta, another Bombay film-maker.

After her accident, she switched to character roles and in the 1950s was awarded the prestigious Filmfare Award for her role as Mrs D'sa, the benevolent Christian lady in *Anari* ("The Novice"). Her other memorable roles included a doting mother in *Daug* ("Spot"), a charming dowager in *Professor and Jungli* ("Savage") and the prototype nasty mother-in-law in *Sau din saas ke* ("Hundred Days of the Mother-in-law"). Her last film was *Bhai* ("Brother") in 1990.

Kuldeep Singh

Amkha Sagan (Lalita Pawar), actress, born Indore, India 1914; married Ganpatrao Pawar (marriage dissolved); secondly Raj Kumar Gupta; died Pune, India 24 February 1998.

Francis Coulson

FRANCIS COULSON was a deeply sensitive cook. He said you needed a light heart to bake a light cake. He likened pastry-making to piano-playing. "It is an art that comes as much from the heart as the hands," he said.

Coulson completed a remarkable half-century as owner with his partner Brian Sack of Sharrow Bay, in Ullswater, Cumbria, the most admired country-house hotel in the country. The Victorian house beside the lake which he bought in 1948 set the pattern for a new era of British country hotels, luxurious but homely, stylish but unobtrusive. The food, cooked by Coulson, was both elegant and comforting. Sharrow Bay was Egon Ronay's Hotel of the Year as long ago as 1974, and Restaurant of the Year in 1980.

Coulson was born in Bedford into a Quaker family, the son of a draper in the town. He went to Bedford Modern School. Disliking its authoritarianism, he found satisfaction with a tutor learning the organ, but his hopes of pursuing a career in music were dashed by the outbreak of the Second World War.

He was a conscientious objector, drafted to forestry work before moving to the church organisation Toc-H. Here he became responsible for producing 300 meals a day and above all caring for his charges. He'd found his *métier*, which he later described as "cossetting, nourishing and nurturing".

His mother had been a fine pastry-cook. His sister Bessie ran a small hotel and, as a boy, he had earned his spurs making omelettes for her. Now, with help from his father, and with his own savings, he bought Sharrow Bay. From its original nine rooms he built it up into the internationally acclaimed hotel it is today, with some 30-odd rooms, a member of the lofty Relais and Châteaux group.

As a cook Coulson had few models apart from his family

and reading of Constance Spry and Elizabeth David. He took pastry-making lessons from a Cordon Bleu-trained cook, Renée Aikinson. He revelled in making difficult croissants and brioches as well as more homely scones and cakes. His sly, light sticky toffee pudding could stand as an epitaph to him in itself.

One of his proudest dishes was a rich cream dessert he named *La Stupenda Bavarois*, dedicated to the great opera singer Joan Sutherland. In 1967 he journeyed to London to pay her this edible tribute in her Covent Garden dressing room on the opening night of Bellini's *Norma*. She lunched into it with delight. Coulson, always a man of gentle wit, recorded that the after-effects were not so happy, as she struggled with wind throughout her performance.

Twenty-one years ago I met Francis Coulson for the first time. He was already renowned. We were on a plane to Paris, where he was to produce the dessert for a five-course meal organised by the restaurant guide *supremo* Egon Ronay, designed to put British food on the European map. He was to cook in the kitchens of Maxim's, then a citadel of Parisian gastronomy.

Coulson confided that he was extremely nervous. Given that he had a delicate heart condition requiring a pacemaker, it certainly did not seem wise to submit to the pressure of cooking in an unfamiliar kitchen for the combined food critics of Britain and France, not to mention those who were being flown in from the US.

That wasn't why he was anxious, he said. It was because he was planning to smuggle two gallons of thick Cumbrian dairy cream through French customs. He said he wasn't prepared to compromise his dish by using an inferior product, French cream. French customs waved him through, and his syllabus with his incomparable breadboard biscuits was applauded by the several hundred international guests.

Francis Coulson was a thinking cook, among the first to introduce "modern" soups such as tomato and orange. But not so modern that he embraced pink meat or *à la carte* vegetables. Each vegetable, he insisted, had its own quality which should be respected.

Michael Bateman

Francis Coulson, chef and hosteler, born Bedford 6 June 1919; MBE 1994; died Ullswater, Cumbria 20 February 1998.



Coulson: 'cossetting'

Henry Steele Commager

HENRY STEELE COMMAGER was a titan of American historiography of the 20th century. His productive career spanned fully two-thirds of it; his writings left few topics in the first 200 years of the Republic uncovered. He was a historian who could both examine and explain, with a clarity and grace possessed by few of his peers, and which turned several of his books into the standard reading of two generations of American students.

Not the most important perhaps, but certainly the most famous was *The Growth of the American Republic*, which he wrote with the late Samuel Eliot Morison. It first appeared

in 1931, and in 1987 Commager, then aged 84, helped Allan Nevins carry out the revision for the book's 10th edition, proof of its enduring appeal as an accessible work of history. In terms of sheer brilliance however, the prize should probably go to *The American Mind*, the 1951 study of the culture and intellectual traditions that shaped the United States, or the 1974 work *Jefferson, Nationalism and the Enlightenment*, or perhaps *The Empire of Reason* which appeared three years later.

As these titles alone suggest, Commager was a believer in American exceptionalism - that the country fashioned by the Founding Fathers was a unique-

ly perfect polity, living realisation of what the leaders of the European Age of Enlightenment dreamt of, but could not achieve on their own scarred continent.

His lodestar was the US Constitution of 1789, by any measure one of the human species' more successful attempts to organise itself, and which Commager argued was the "greatest monument to political science in literature". The Constitution was the yardstick against which he would judge all statesmen and events, and its violation was the offence he most abhorred.

That conviction lay behind his forays into the contemporary po-



Commager: history as story

litical arena. He would describe himself as an "Independent Democrat". More accurately, he was a Constitutional fundamentalist. The belief generated

at least one act of much courage, his early and trenchant opposition to McCarthyism (on the grounds that the oaths of loyalty demanded by the Wisconsin senator were an abuse of the Constitution) - and another of considerable prescience, when he spoke out strongly in 1966 against the US's entanglement in Vietnam.

Again, his point of departure was the Constitution, and the authority it gave Congress over the waging of war. Hence, too, his outrage at Richard Nixon's abuse of his oath of office. Never, he wrote of Watergate, had an administration "practised deception, duplicity, chicanery and mendacity". Never,

in other words, had a President inflicted such injury on the Constitution.

Towards the end of his life, Commager inevitably fell victim to some revisionism. His belief in the Republic's perfect birth was exaggerated, it was said. He was accused of taking too little account of the part of blacks, Hispanics and the American Indian in the story of his country, and of allowing his trust in logic and reason to blind him to the role of religion in shaping America. But these are mere quibbles, when set alongside an output of at least 50 books, and countless essays, treatises and press articles.

During his long career, he

held chairs and lectureships at a score of universities in the US and around the world, including both Oxford and Cambridge, where he taught in 1941 and returned as Pitt Professor in American History in 1947-48. He had been since 1972 Simpson Lecturer at Amherst College, Massachusetts, the post previously held by the poets Robert Frost and Archibald MacLeish.

His most enduring gift was to make history come alive - to interest people it might otherwise leave stone cold. "History is a story," he would say, "and if it neglects to tell a story it will inevitably forfeit much of its appeal and much of its authority

as well." That was a trap into which Commager never fell.

Rupert Cornwell

Henry Steele Commager, historian, born Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 25 October 1902; Professor of History, New York University 1929-38; Professor of History, Columbia University 1938-56; Lecturer on American History, Cambridge University 1942-43; Pitt Professor of American History 1947-48; Harvard Visiting Professor of American History, Oxford University 1952; Professor of American History, Amherst College 1956-72; Simpson Lecturer 1972-92; married 1928 Evan Carroll (deceased); one son, two daughters; 1979 Mary Pomeroy died Amherst, Massachusetts 2 March 1998.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1, Cannon Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 3DL, telephone 021-293 0212 or faxed to 021-293 0201, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra). Other Gazette announcements (notices, funerals, forthcoming marriages, marriages) must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra. They should be accompanied by a daytime telephone number.

THE OBITUARIES e-mail address is obituaries@independent.co.uk

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh will spend the day at the Royal Household Golf Club at Troilstone, Berkshire. The Duke of Edinburgh will attend the Annual Dinner of the Royal Household Golf Club at Troilstone, Berkshire. The Duke of Edinburgh will attend the Annual Dinner of the Royal Household Golf Club at Troilstone, Berkshire. The Duke of Edinburgh will attend the Annual Dinner of the Royal Household Golf Club at Troilstone, Berkshire.

Changing of the Guard

Birthdays

Dr Midge Adam, astronomer, 80; Miss Jean Bohl, actress, 10; Brigadier Michael Calvert, former SAS commander, 85; Mr William Davis, editor and publisher of *High Life*, 85; Miss Kiki Doo, rock singer, 51; Lord Dixon, former MP, 69; Professor Sir Charles Frank, physicist, 57; Mr David Gilman, rock guitarist and singer, 54; Mr Richard Giordano, chairman, BQ plc, 64; Sir Alastair Grant, chairman, Scottish & Newcastle plc, 61; Professor David Hendry, Professor of Economics, Oxford University, 54; Professor Sir Raymond Hoffenberg, former President, Wolfson College, Oxford, 75; Miss Judy Lee, actress, 51; Mr Larry Mazer, conductor, 88; Sir Hol Miller, former MP, 69; Mr Malcolm Moss, MP, 55; Mr John Neokes, actor and television presenter, 64; Mr Richard Noble, world land speed record holder, 52; Mr Peter Rother, cricketer, 42; Sir Ian Dixon Scott, former ambassador, 89; The Right Rev David Sheppard, former Bishop of Liverpool, 69; Dame Kim To Kuma, opera soprano, 54; Miss Valentin Nikolayeva Tereshkova, astronaut, 61; Dr David Whitaker, director, Imperial Cancer Research Fund Trading Ltd, 67; Miss Mary Wilson, singer, 54; Mrs Ann Winterlin, MP, 57; Sir Oliver Wright, former ambassador in Washington, 77.

Anniversaries

Births: Michelangelo (Michelangelo Buonarroti), painter, sculptor and poet, 1475; Elizabeth Barrett Browning, poet, 1806; Frankie Howard (Francis Alex Howard), comedian,

Deaths

1922: Deaths: Davy Crockett, frontiersman, killed at the Alamo 1836; Louisa May Alcott, novelist, 1888; George Formby (William Hoy Booth), singer and comedian, 1961; Melina Mercouri (Amalia-Maria Mercouri), actress and Greek minister of culture, 1994. On this day: Verdi's *La Traviata* was first performed, Venice 1853; British soldiers were granted the right to wear spectacles on or off duty, 1902; frozen food was first put on sale by the Birds company, 1930; Ghana (formerly the Gold Coast and Togoland) became independent, 1957. Today is the Feast Day of Saints Baldo and Billrid, St Cadoc, St Chrodegang of Metz, St Colette, Saints Cynburga, Cynwilde and Tibba, St Cyril of Constantinople, St Fridolin, St Olegarius or Odegarus and Saints Perpetua and Felicity.

Lectures

Tate Gallery: Colin Wiggins, "Bonnard and the Ageless Woman", 1pm, Gresham College (Barnard's Inn Hall, London EC1); Professor Colin Lindgren, "You Are What You Eat (+?)", 1pm.

Synagogue services

Details of synagogue services to be held tomorrow may be obtained by telephoning the following. Sabbath begins in London at 5.35pm.

United Synagogue: 011-341 8888. Federation of Synagogues: 011-293 7263. Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues: 011-290 1444. Reform Synagogue of Great Britain: 011-349 4731. Spanish and Portuguese Jew Congregation: 011-239 2573. New London Synagogue (Reform): 011-238 1024.

LAW REPORT: 6 MARCH 1998

CPS should have records of police misconduct

Regina v Guney, Court of Appeal (Criminal Division) (Lord Justice Judge, Mr Justice Poole, Judge Rant QC, Judge Advocate General) 27 February 1998

RECORDS available to the Crown Prosecution Service should include not only information about convictions and disciplinary proceedings against police officers, but also transcripts of appeals which had succeeded on the basis of police officers' misconduct or untruthfulness, and of cases which had been dropped on the same basis, to enable disclosure to the defence in appropriate cases.

Evidence of possession of cash should not, as a matter of law, be automatically excluded in cases of simple possession of drugs.

The Court of Appeal dismissed the appeal of *Erkin Guney* against his conviction of possessing a Class A controlled drug with

intent to supply, and of possessing a firearm and ammunition without a firearms certificate.

The appellant's home had been searched pursuant to a warrant by six police officers, three of whom had formerly been members of the notorious Drugs Squad based at Stoke Newington. As a result of the search £25,000 in cash, a handgun and live ammunition, and heroin with a street value of about £750,000, were found in a wardrobe. He appealed against his conviction on the grounds that the Crown had failed to disclose relevant material, and that evidence about the finding of the cash should have been excluded.

Edmond Lawson QC (who did not appear at trial) and *Paul Kelleher (Kaim Toher)* for the appellant; *David Jeremy (Crown Prosecution Service)* for the Crown.

Lord Justice Judge said that during the trial, largely in the

form of questions from defence counsel, the jury had heard evidence about the Operation Jackpot enquiry into the activities of the Stoke Newington Drugs Squad, but it had not included any individual information about the three officers who had been involved in the search of the appellant's home.

The Crown had taken the stance that nothing material which required disclosure under the rules then in force had arisen from that enquiry, nor from a number of prosecutions in which one or other of the three officers had been involved and which had been dropped or had resulted in acquittal, or where a conviction had been set aside on appeal. No criminal or disciplinary proceedings had been taken against the three officers.

It had been rightly argued on the appeal that the defence was entitled to be in-

formed of any convictions and disciplinary findings against any police officers in the case. However, in addition to convictions and disciplinary findings, the records available to the Crown Prosecution Service should include transcripts of any decisions of the Court of Appeal in which convictions had been quashed on the express basis of misconduct or lack of veracity of identified police officers, as well as of cases which had been stopped by the trial judge or had been discontinued on the same basis.

Although the cases in which two of the three officers had been involved should have been disclosed, the jury had been informed about Operation Jackpot. A Soresbrook jury hardly needed any such reminder and would have been fully alert to the implications. The safety of the conviction was not undermined.

At the trial it had been accepted that if it was proved that the appellant had been in possession of the heroin found in his bedroom, the jury could infer that he had intended to supply it. The real issue was not intent but possession. From that it had been submitted, relying on *R v Halpin* [1996] Crim L.R. 112, that as a matter of principle evidence about the finding of the £25,000 cash in the wardrobe was inadmissible.

Evidence of possession of cash would often lack any probative value. Nevertheless the relevance of any particular piece of evidence should be decided on a case-by-case basis, and accordingly the court was unable to accept that, as a matter of law, such evidence must automatically be excluded as irrelevant. In the present case, the evidence had been relevant.

Kate O'Hanlon, Barrister

THE INDEPENDENT

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Put the trains back on the rails

IT IS now plain that the way the Tories privatised Britain's rail network was scandalous. They conducted a financial exercise: the scheme had minimal regard for the interests of rail passengers and maximal concern for quick profits. Here was short-termism of the very worst kind. Evidence for the charge comes from the National Audit Office. Its figures for the profits garnered by train and franchise buyers who just happened to be in the right place at the right time to take advantage of Tory largesse almost beggar belief. To make a 220-fold gain on the back of public assets has nothing to do with enterprise or imagination. The only market involved was one in assiduity in how best to rip the state off. Rail privatisation, we now can see, was a kind of legalised theft. The scale of windfall gains occludes the moral climate and diminishes the capacity of the state in other contexts to pursue income-tax evaders and social security fraudsters.

And evidence also comes from the markets, from the extraordinary spectacle of the directors of a company - Great Western - standing to make millions after having provided the public with mediocre or downright unreliable service. Meanwhile the Health and Safety Executive has got as far as preparing prosecutions against Railtrack which - simultaneously and with tender regard for the public's well-being - announces it intends cutting the amount it spends on repairs and maintenance by £80m a year. We learnt, months ago, that the Transport Secretary, Gavin Strang, is a cipher. This ball is in the court of the deputy prime minister, John Prescott, and the salient question is not that he should act - he must, if only to reassure the travelling public that they are not going to be either gouged or killed - but how.

There is nothing wrong with the principle of private ownership of infrastructure, provided a regulatory regime is in place to control fares and ensure safety and reliable service. What the Tories bequeathed New Labour was not just a financial catastrophe but regulatory confusion. Why are there separate regulators for track and passenger franchises? Rail regulation ought to be unified, expert, omniscient and passionately devoted to the development of rail transport. Instead it is fragmented, amateur and all too prone to have the wool pulled over its eyes.

Having blocked the sale of Great Western, Mr Prescott must now lean on John Swift, the track regulator and John O'Brien, the man responsible for the passenger franchises. They have to sharpen up. How could FirstGroup, or anyone else, have been allowed to pay a price for Great Western which is inflated by its failure to perform according to contract? The regulator surely must revalue the company at its performance price - a damn sight lower. And the new franchisees has to be told in no uncertain terms that fines and public outcry will fall swift and fast if service does not improve.

Mr Prescott has two further tasks, one backward-looking and one developmental. The National Audit Office has laid a heavy set of charges at the door both of the Tory Transport Secretary Sir George Young and his officials, none of whom even dreamt of blowing a whistle in the hearing of the Comptroller and Auditor-General. We have, in Britain, a no-fault culture in Whitehall, but can Mr Prescott afford not to ask some searching questions about his civil servants' handling of rail privatisation? As for Sir George Young, if the Public Accounts Committee does not subject him to the fiercest interrogation it will be failing in its duty. The least the Blair government can do is order an immediate moratorium on all those Foreign Office sponsored trips by gurus (and former civil servants) to eastern Europe preaching to them on how to privatise.

But for the future, Mr Prescott has a railway to run and a network to expand. There are alternative regimes for track and passenger service which could ensure more investment and better performance. His saddest inheritance from the Tories is a culture of under-performance among the franchisees and the arrogant way certain companies ignore complaints and, still, prefer excess profit to providing the public with fast and safe trains.

Marry in haste...



WE KNOW the Prime Minister approves of marriage and wants to promote it - without in any way casting aspersions on those of his colleagues who are less fortunate than he on the conjugal front. The question is, how to get the message across. He and Cherie appeared on the step of No 10 Downing Street for a photocall the other day, holding a single red rose to advertise National Marriage Week. Is that going to stop people hurrying into unsuitable matches, or suing for divorce the first time the top is left off the toothpaste tube? Hardly.

Now we have the solution. The Wildenstein Solution. All the Government has to do is to draw the moral from the divorce of Alec and Jocelyne Wildenstein. Alec W. from a family worth billions of dollars, claims to earn \$175,000 a year, although New York court depositions show he and his wife spent \$16m in 1995 and \$11m the next year. She claimed she needed \$2.4m a year, partly because she did not know how to make toast or boil water. He complained that her insatiable appetite for plastic surgery "submitted us to public ridicule".

That's it: ridicule. Jack Straw could compile a fact pack on the couple's embarrassment and humiliations for his parenting classes. And another on Earl Spencer's divorce case in South Africa, when his wife accused him of having had 12 mistresses and threatened to call them all to give evidence. That should put them off.



Trick shot: 'Walking Gun', by the American photographer Laurie Simmons is one of the images collected in the book 'From the Heart: The Power of Photography, A Collector's Choice: The Sondra Gilman Collection'. Published by Aperture, it is distributed in the UK by Robert Hale, price £22

Time to help Iraq

NOW THAT, for a while at least, the threat of British military intervention in Iraq has receded, attention should turn urgently to the long-term prospects for the country.

The effect of current UN sanctions on the civilian population is counter-productive and indefensible. Allowing the people of Iraq to suffer malnutrition and poor health is like refusing food and medicine to the passengers in a hijacked plane, but it is not the only effect. Little has been said about the educational damage being inflicted on the country, though this is serious. The existence of sanctions has also fostered the illicit plundering of major archaeological sites and the export of important antiquities.

Despite official statements, the humanitarian exemptions to the sanctions are being undermined by deliberately harsh interpretation and obstructive administration. This is unjustifiable and impolitic, and must cease. In the short term it cannot be impossible for the UN to maintain intensive and sustained monitoring of imports of military weapons and materials, while enabling the necessary emergency programme to get medicine and food to the population.

In the long term, change for the better in Iraq will only come from within the country. Let us release the population from their fight for survival and allow them to recover their former civilised standards of health, nutrition and education. At present we are creating a giant Gaza strip, with untold dangers for the future.

Professor AKBAR AHMED
Selwyn College, Cambridge
PATRICK COLLINSON
Regius Professor Emeritus in Modern History, University of Cambridge

Dr G C HARCOURT
Jesus College, Cambridge
Professor CLIVE HOLES
Oriental Institute, University of Oxford

Dr CAROLINE HUMPHREY
King's College, Cambridge
TARIF KHALIDI
Sir Thomas Adams's Professor of Arabic, University of Cambridge

Professor NICHOLAS LASH
Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge

Cambridge
Dr AUGUSTA McMAHON
Newnham College, Cambridge
Dr JOHN MILBANK
Reader in Philosophical Theology, University of Cambridge
NICHOLAS POSTGATE
Professor of Assyriology, University of Cambridge

Millennium bug

BARBARA ROCHE, the Department of Trade and Industry minister, is spot-on in advocating accelerated action in tackling the so-called millennium bug. However, Taskforce 2000, then DTI-funded, pressed government to start an urgent programme in July last year. Nothing happened. And after an article by your political editor, Tony Bevis, in September, our DTI money was terminated.

Since then, the Government has slowly been adopting our recommendations. But we are now eight months nearer to the merciless deadline. Therefore, what needs to be done has changed. Unfortunately, the Government seems not to understand that. We suggest, therefore, that it may not be in the best position to provide the lead to the EU that is so badly needed.

ROBIN GUENIER
Executive Director
Taskforce 2000
London EC3

Woodward appeal

THE JUDGES of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts are hearing appeals arising from Judge Zobel's controversial judgment in the Louise Woodward case. We suggest that the international community in its reaction to the deliberations of the court bear in mind two apparent breaches of fundamental law on fair trials:

The presumption of innocence

LETTERS

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has always been at the heart of a case that in fact revolves entirely around expert professional opinion. What does concern here is the conflict of evidence knowingly presented by a prosecution whose duty it was to demonstrate consistent expert evidence putting the facts beyond reasonable doubt. The prosecution knew before they went to trial that their medical examiner, Dr Gerald Feigin, was in total disagreement with other prosecution witnesses both as to the extent of the force required to produce the skull damage and the presence of shaken baby syndrome.

The most obvious, perhaps incurable, flaw in the trial was the failure of the trial judge to ensure that the jury, despite their repeated requests, were given parallel defence evidence after they were given prosecution medical evidence. It was breach of that most fundamental principle of fair trials, parity of arms between prosecution and defence.

In normal circumstances one would expect an order for a retrial, but it is hard to envisage, given intense publicity and debate surrounding the original trial, as a practical possibility.

STEPHEN JAKOBI
Director
The Fair Trials Abroad Trust
Richmond, Surrey

Dangers of cannabis

R E STEBBING (letters 25 February) echoes fashionable but misinformed opinion by claiming that "the evidence that cannabis is non-habit-forming and less damaging than heroin, tobacco and alcohol is now overwhelming".

The question has been pertinently addressed to the authorities in those tropical countries where cannabis abuse has been endemic. A number of reports from such sources, including a survey commissioned by the United Nations,

have warned the West of the dangers of a lax attitude to the "recreational" use of cannabis (the medicinal use is an entirely separate issue).

The drug is readily available in these countries because it grows as a weed, but most indigenous people refuse to touch it because of its demotivating and dispiriting effect on regular abusers is obvious.

ANTHONY ALEXANDER
Douglas, Isle of Man

Trees on the march

PATRICK NAISH (letter, 4 March) asks what will happen to the land if farmers go out of business. The answer is simple: forestry. Foresters have been critical about agriculture for decades, particularly the dependence of farmers on subsidies (conveniently ignoring the tax concessions and planting grants available to forest owners). For them the current crisis is long awaited.

Has the Government even considered alternatives to agriculture over much of the uplands of this country? Aside from the obvious implications to birds such as the skylark, the proposed right to roam becomes of academic interest if it involves roaming through thicket, stage Sitka spruce.

JOHN LLOYD
Llandovery, Carmarthenshire

My offer to the nation

I NEVER never thought that Lord Chancellor Irvine and I had so much in common. I too have a fondness for the odd Turner, Picasso or Rodin. I too am quite willing to open my home for a few days a year in exchange for displaying a few neglected art treasures. I too have been in touch with the keepers of our various national museums. Strangely, no reply so far.

MARK RIMMEL
London N19

Modern Latin

IAN FLINTOFF (letter, 4 March) is probably right that classical literary Latin is too complex to be used as a common European second language. Not even the Romans used it for everyday speech, preferring a much simpler version now known as Vulgar Latin, the ancestor of today's Romance languages. This dialect could certainly be taught to schoolchildren.

By adopting Latin as a common second language, each nation would be free to maintain its own rich vernacular tradition, while gaining access to a magnificent common cultural heritage. If we really want to find a European identity, this is a good place to start.

ROGER WORDSWORTH
Kirkham, Lancashire

LET US build on the successes of Esperanto. I have used it in Amsterdam, Prague, Helsinki and Reykjavik and have had contacts with Esperantists of many other countries including China and Japan.

Syntactically, it is easier than English, and entirely phonetic. Your original article joked about Greeks and Estonians being the last to laugh because of re-translation problems. Greek and Estonian Esperantists laugh with the rest of us!

PETER G HAYWARD
Bournemouth, Dorset

THERE IS no need to go for a highly artificial language like Esperanto when Europe's natural common language, Latin, is perfectly intelligible without its declensions and conjugations and Ciceronian syntax. The Italian mathematician Giuseppe Peano demonstrated this 90 years ago in his *Latino sine flectone*, which lives on as Interlingua.

P J STEWART
St Anne's College, Oxford

IF WE are to have a Euro-language, there is surely one language already in existence which is supra-national, which would remind us of the wisdom of the past, encourage us in high ideals in the future and both look and sound beautiful. May I propose Elvish?

JUNE WYTON
Bristol

God, sex, Kafka and roof racks - all made clear by traditional Albanian wisdom



MILES KINGSTON

AS REGULAR readers will know, I have always had a weakness for Albanian proverbs, which have a paradoxical nature typical of a country which managed to be an atheist state for so many years despite the majority of the population being Muslim. Our British proverbs tend to be sensible-sounding without having much to teach us. Albanian proverbs are quite the opposite: opaque at first sight, but nutritious after much chewing.

Anyway, judge for yourself in this latest cropping from the Great Book of Albanian Proverbs

No great comedy hit ever had a comic title.

Prayer-time: the only time when a Christian comes out in the open and tells God what to do.

In the country of the blind, the optician starves.

A tennis ball is used for many different activities, but a cricket ball is used only for cricket.

Never stand between a dog and a tree.

Show me a king or queen who can hum their national anthem backwards, and I'll show you a man or woman who is too smart to be a monarch.

A boomerang that returns is a reproach to its owner, for it is a boomerang that has missed its target.

There are many more people who use the word "Kafkaesque" than ever read Kafka.

Three things that are a waste of money:

theatre programmes, wine in a pub and a National Lottery ticket.

A roof rack is mildly useful for carrying luggage, but it is extremely useful for identifying your car in a large car park.

The person most dependent on road transport is a hitch-hiker, yet he is the one person who is never mentioned in traffic surveys.

Which came first: the pencil or the pencil sharpener?

The most successful and yet most unobtrusive lobby group of all time is the movement dedicated to keeping angling out of the Olympic Games.

What question would you pay Martin Bell to ask in Parliament?

Whatever the commonest tree is in your country, it is not as common as ivy.

When a hostage is released, nobody ever asks the captor to write a book about the experience.

There is nothing more talked about by men than sex, or less practised.

Who ever heard of a man being trained to lead a blind dog around?

Soft, pliable, easily moulded - all the definitions for "plastic" given in the dictionary, and all the things that plastic is not.

Cuba must be an awful place. Nobody has hijacked a plane to go there for years.

Yes, but should anyone WANT to grasp a nettle?

Language always lags behind technology. We still say "full steam ahead", and we still call it a "telegraph" pole.

In four hundred years the Italians have turned the tomato into the basis for the best cooking in the world. In the same period the Americans have turned it into ketchup.

All these quotations taken from the Great Book of Albanian Proverbs, 1998 edition.

Correction

Yesterday I wrote that "The Seckers films represent one of the peaks of twentieth-century art." This should have been, of course, "De Sica's films represent one of the peaks of twentieth-century art".

It's time Mr Cook applied his ethics to China



DONALD
MACINTYRE

An angry dissident brings a message for us all: defend human rights, whatever it costs

FATE has delivered *The Times* an ideal opportunity to demonstrate the robustness of its China coverage, forcefully reaffirmed yesterday by its editor Peter Stothard. Next week Wei Jingsheng, China's Sakharov, comes to Britain. The arrival from the US of the People's Republic's leading dissident, exiled after 18 years in jail, to give a lecture at St Antony's College, Oxford, on Tuesday and meet Robin Cook on Wednesday, is an important event. Wei has, as it happens, become unwittingly caught up in Rupert Murdoch's pervasive China interests. He was to have contributed a chapter to a book which Harper Collins has put on hold after the indefensible dumping of *East and West* by Chris Patten, the former governor of Hong Kong. The second book was planned to commemorate Amnesty International's 40th anniversary and, given its subject, would be almost comically incomplete without the sort of authoritative account of human rights abuses in the largest Communist regime in the world that Wei would have contributed. But the importance of his visit goes well beyond that. For Wei arrives in London an angry man, who will have a good deal to talk about with the Foreign Secretary.

Last week in Brussels, the EU's 15 foreign ministers approved a carefully worded declaration on China. It reflected a compromise, brokered by Cook in the chair, between those countries like France, and less publicly Germany, that oppose, for more or less nakedly commercial reasons a hard line against China on human rights, and those such as Denmark and Holland which have been historically outspoken about the manifold abuses perpetrated by the Peking regime. The outcome was a testament to Cook's skill as a chairman, for which he is steadily building a reputation during the British EU presidency. It goes further than the doves like France would have liked but a good deal less far than Denmark would have preferred. But it also reflected a shift from the British government's position before the election. For several years now Britain has joined the US in submitting a strongly critical resolution on human rights in China to the annual UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva. This year it will not be doing so. Indeed the EU communiqué says explicitly that neither the British presidency nor any other member state will submit any such resolution.

The arguments against submitting such a resolution have annually been pressed with great force in Whitehall, but were in the end always overruled by, successively, Douglas

Hurd and Malcolm Rifkind, with the strongest backing from Patten during his governorship. This year, however, their case found more of an echo; Cook had spoken after the election of Britain's building a new relationship with China and submission of yet another probably doomed human rights resolution would not exactly help her to do so. The principal argument from corporatists and China hands among ministers and officials was that - thanks to diplomatic and commercial pressure from China - the resolution was invariably voted down, so pressing it threatened the trading interests of countries pressing it without any gain.

But Wei doesn't see it that way. In *Le Monde* on Wednesday he expressed his "deep indignation" at the "quite stupefying" EU foreign ministers' decision and was withering about the idea that his own release last year indicated that human rights were improving in the largest, and one of the most repressive states in the world. As well he might have been given that the EU decision came at the same time as fresh exposure of the gruesome sale of human organs by Chinese agencies and the arrest of further dissidents in the run-up to the People's National Congress this week. Wei pointed out that those who have agitated for democracy since the Tiananmen Square massacre are watched and persecuted on a daily basis by the secret police. And he declared that the "values of Western politicians are in retreat so that they can adapt themselves to Chinese criteria". Which was not surprising since in a long conversation in London with Patten in January Wei had dwelt on the huge importance attached by Peking to Western attitudes to a UN resolution. He said that he had noticed how his own prison conditions had improved whenever leading Western, including EU countries, were publicly attacking China over its abysmal human rights record. All the signs, in other words, are that China reacts to pressure better than to the increased "dialogue" the EU is now proposing. All this Patten privately passed on to the Foreign Office shortly afterwards.

The supposed threat to trade with China from a robust attitude to human rights is any way extremely doubtful. Between 1992 and 1997 when Patten was incurring the wrath of China hands such as Sir Percy Cradock and others by pressing for democracy in Hong Kong trade with China doubled. The drive to realise China's potential as a market probably isn't much affected one way or the other by a tough line on human rights.

The shift of policy towards China certainly wasn't Cook's alone and no doubt reflects the business orientation of New Labour. Cook's sincerity on human rights is real. He explained in Brussels that Peking had now said it would allow a visit by Mary Robinson, the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, and that whether the EU would press a UN resolution next year would depend on progress - including the release of political prisoners. But the necessary coalition may be even more difficult to assemble next year than last. A much better time to harden the line is at the Cardiff summit in June. Wei is likely to tell Cook on Wednesday that they are now crowing in Peking. Labour was always forthright on the need for South African sanctions. It rightly urged the Thatcher government to listen to Nelson Mandela whatever the alleged economic costs. If ethical foreign policy is to be more than a soundbite Cook needs to listen very hard to Wei on Wednesday.

The bombers are among us and we'll never know their names

Brainy, barmy outsiders want to wreak revenge on society. And now, says David Aaronovitch, they have the anonymous cyber-help to do it

IT'S BAD enough when the harassed supermarket check-out girl hurts your yoghurt on top of your eggs while you scramble shoulder-deep in plastic bags, trying desperately to pack your shopping, before the mineral water obliterates both your cornflakes. But now you can't even go to Sainsbury's without some lunatic trying to blow you up.

On Wednesday another explosive device went off close to a branch of the store in the London suburb of Forest Hill. The police said that it "bore all the hallmarks" of the Mardi Gra bomber (is there - in the East End perhaps - some little unshaven underworld explosives expert, who spends his life chiselling initials or symbols on the sides of bombs attesting to their quality?).

We will return to this scourge of suburban shoppers later, for, by interesting coincidence, also on Wednesday two other ominous things happened; one in the English Home Counties, and the other - as reported in this newspaper - in the United States. In Bexleyheath, Kent, two 16-year-old boys were questioned about three blasts in just over a fortnight, caused by home-made pipe-bombs. A search turned up some chemicals and three more unexploded bombs. At a guess these probably bore all the hallmarks of naughty schoolboys.

And over the water the Americans were experiencing "cyberterror", a rather overblown phrase for the temporary freezing of a few terminals.

Nevertheless the implication of the attack - that somebody could and would use the Internet to disable vital operating systems from afar - caused unsurprising consternation.

Join the dots together and it's all a bit worrying, isn't it, this pattern of anonymous assaults? Since 1994, when he first wrapped six devices in Christmas paper and delivered them to Barclays bank, Mardi Gra has been credited with 33 attacks. One of his current tricks appears to be leaving a shopping bag with a bomb in it at bus-stops, where old ladies and others pick them up along with their own shopping, and cart them back to Dunroamin for unpacking. Such a strategy does not suggest a kind heart. The explosions are bound to get bigger and louder and better publicised, until some poor innocent sod dies. He reminds one irresistibly of the reclusive maths don Ted Kaczynski - the Unabomber - who killed several people with bombs mailed from his kennel in the mountains of Montana.

Meanwhile the cyberterrorists are on the march. Some of the worries about their activities can sound silly. One site warns that cyberterrorists could do you over when, "all those electronic publications you've subscribed to are mysteriously vaporised, because somebody discovered your passwords and unsubscribed you". Bang goes your passport to an unbiased survey of international news courtesy of *The Times*. You'll survive. However the potential impact, variously, of viruses, worms, logic bombs, Bots, and SYN attacks, has led the US National Security Agency to employ 1,000 cyberdefenders in "an information warfare department". The worry is that



Ted Kaczynski, Unabomber: The reclusive maths don mailed bombs from his kennel in Montana. Now he has imitators all over the Internet

Photograph: AP

fetched. What does seem likely is that Mardi Gra is educated, inadequate and - above all, alienated. Contemporary capitalist society with its emphasis on achievement and materialism and its destruction of community has given birth to a whole geological stratum of brainy, barmy, outsider-type guys who want to see how far they can - alone and unassisted - take on and defeat that society. Scary.

Very scary because it's so easy to do. So let me warn you that, should you write me one of those whining, complaining letters that readers sometimes do - pointing out some minor error of fact or interpretation - don't put your address on it. Because I could kill you.

Today, as I sat here at my terminal, I put two words into an Internet Search Engine and discovered how to blow you up. The author of the article in question confided in me how to build a home-made shotgun shell mine, a driveway pipe mine and - best of all - a letter bomb. Using language as accessible as that of a Blue Peter presenter, he told me what to buy, how to put a device together and even how to tailor it to my own specialised needs. Did I want shrapnel, or would I rather do without? Each helpful section began with a general introduction, as in "Letter bombs have the great advantage that you can send them anywhere in the world. I have successfully mailed these throughout North America." Then a practical DIY hit: "To make a letter bomb the way I do ... fold over the open end of the envelope and staple it closed once or twice." And the advice ended in a final encouraging flourish: "Mail it off to your target and when they open it and try to remove the papers ... BOOM!"

If this gives you nightmares then there are ways that you can guard against such unwelcome packages. A Net security site suggests that you watch out for grease stains, too many stamps (the last thing a bomber wants is for the drum thing to be returned stamped "inadequate postage"), if it is mailed from an "unfamiliar location" - like Bexleyheath for instance - or if there is the odour of almonds.

But what is truly amazing about this Doomsday stuff - given the alienation, the anonymity, the availability of the technology, society's vulnerability and all that - is how remarkably little it happens. Compare the incidence of Mardi Gra explosions, teenage suburban bombers and cyberterrorism with those other activities that tell of male disaffection: lobbing concrete off motorway bridges, stabbing people outside discos, or - most common of all - filling the car with carbon monoxide while still inside it. Whose ballmarks do these sad activities bear?

Each section began with an introduction like 'Letter bombs have the great advantage that you can send them anywhere in the world'

teen hackers could, according to *E* magazine, "cripple the United States information infrastructure during the height of holiday travel. Onboard computers could redirect planes into conflicting flight paths. Subway systems could be shut down or reprogrammed for collision. And that's just for starters." Philip LaCombe, the director of the President's commission on critical in-

Don't swap the slavery of the hearth for a yoke of work



YVONNE
ROBERTS

Women languish on the economic margins. This Budget should address their needs

AFTER decades in which the nation's housekeeping has been assessed from an overwhelmingly male perspective, I feel almost churlish raising criticisms of a Budget billed as being for women and children.

Recognition of concerns such as childcare, the promise of a minimum wage, a female voice that government finally hears - what more can a girl want? Well, quite a lot. New Labour makes much of the desirability of work. But women who never move into the job market are already in work as unpaid labourers. As housekeepers, carers and mothers what they do may not yet be valued by economists and incorporated into the GDP, but it matters.

This is, after all, the gov-

ernment that says it cares about social cohesion. It should support those at the sharp end of keeping communities together with more than warm words.

Brown should also signal his realization that for those women who do work, the pattern of paid employment is very different from that of men. Forty-five per cent of them work part-time, frequently because of their family commitments. The majority in this low-paid sector tend to get stuck there, in the quicksand of aspirations. Low paid work also means that over two million women earn less than £62 a week. This is the lower earnings limit on the payment of national insurance and as such the gateway to a number of bene-

fits such as maternity pay and pensions. Let's hope Brown lowers the threshold and cuts the link between maternity pay and national insurance altogether.

Women retraining or studying need childcare grants. If mothers don't improve their qualifications they are stuck in a low-pay rut for life. Tax relief on childcare is equally important. None seems to be promised. In France, parents also have access to state-subsidised childminders who are paid the minimum wage. We need such imaginative measures here and a further spreading of the burden of childcare costs.

Will Brown find ways to encourage employers to split

charges - a third for government, a third for the individual, and a third for the boss? And why not have paid parental and paternity leave. It is time that we recognized that caring for offspring is a father's concern too.

If the interests of women and children are truly to come first, instead of Working Family Tax Credit (topping up low pay via employers and the Inland Revenue) there should be a significant increase in child benefit, taxed for high earners. Child benefit is fraud-proof and it gives a mother the choice of staying at home or paying for childcare. Britain has 6.5 million carers: why not give them an allowance within the working family tax credit too?

The requirements of women and children have been pushed to the margins of economic life for too long. We do not need policies that aim only to drive more women into the world of work, but to change conditions so that they fit the obligations and aspirations of women themselves.

At the same time, the right to be a full time mother should be supported - otherwise the "good" mother will soon rank only as the waged mother. That is no advance for feminism, nor for children. New Labour rightly preaches liberation from benefits. But if the only alternative is a lifetime of slavery on low wages, followed by an old age on a piddling pension, that is no progress at all.

HARPERCOLLINS'S chief Eddie Bell, who was blamed by his boss Rupert Murdoch for the fiasco over Chris Patten's book on Hong Kong, is a tough but genial Scot. He won't need counselling to repair his fragile feelings. But the publisher might try reading a book to find some consolation. Pandora has a particular one in mind: *The Victory* by Pamela Williams, which chronicles the March 1996 Australian election in which John Howard crushed Paul Keating. The Murdoch press was particularly unhelpful to Keating during the campaign. According to the book, "Keating insisted Rupert Murdoch had telephoned him the day after the election to apologise: 'Ken got it wrong' - a reference to Ken Cowie, chief executive of Murdoch's Australian operations." Clearly Murdoch's men around the world should know by now exactly who feeds the bill when things

go wrong - they do. Sadly for Eddie Bell, this tale has no happy ending. Ken "Got It Wrong" Cowie left Murdoch's employ last year and was replaced by Rupert Murdoch's son Lachlan.

MICHAEL Foster's, Labour MP, sees his anti-hunting Bill return to the Commons today, although it is highly unlikely that the Government will find time for it. His chief adviser on the Bill is one John Bryant, author of a book which declares "pet animals should be completely phased out of existence". Bryant is also a consultant to the International Fund for Animal Welfare, whose political wing (the Political Animal Lobby) donated £1m to the Labour Party. Is the Government really concerned about the country-side lobby or worried lest another Ecclestone-like donation scandal arises should it enable Foster and Bryant's Bill to become law?



A USUALLY reliable source informed us, wrongly it turns out, that Geoffrey Robertson QC was the new chairman of the anti-monarchy Common Sense Club, whose members include journalists Roy Greenslade and Anthony Holden and PR gladiator Brian Basham. "I've been to a few of their dinners but ... is that really a position?" Robertson is an outspoken republican and regards "a hereditary head of state as unsatisfactory as a hereditary poet". He doesn't want to see the Royals "taken down into some cellar and shot or

something." His ideal solution is a written constitution. "I suggest we turn the Millennium Dome over to a Constitutional Convention after the exhibition." It sounds a good idea to Pandora. Why not skip the tasteless exhibition and hold the noble convention in its place?

ONE of the most fortunate men in Britain is refurbishing what promises to be one of London's most spectacular new homes, directly adjacent to the Albert Hall on the site of the former Royal College of Organists. Robert Tchenguiz, together with his brother Vincent, runs the multi-million-pound property group Rotch. Like several other phenomenally successful modern Brits, including the Seatchi brothers and Alan Yentob, Tchenguiz has an Iraqi Jewish background, although his father Victor came to Britain via Iran where he was a friend of the Shah. Not only is Robert very rich, but his girlfriend is Wonderbra model and men's magazine



Bobby's girl

Gore. "I won't say anything at all about this house until it's ready in six or nine months' time." What is the big mystery? All Pandora's wiles failed to persuade this lucky man to say another word.

Pandora

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GEC prepares to launch £5bn telecoms and defence strike

By Michael Harrison

GEC is gearing up for a £5bn expansion that is likely to see the defence electronics and engineering group buy out Siemens' minority stake in their telecoms joint venture and launch a strike for a US military supplier. GEC is also looking to merge two of its four remaining industrial electronics businesses with rival companies. The remaining two would be disposed of along with GEC's 50 per cent interest in its domestic appliances joint venture with GE of the United States.

The shift in strategy by Lord Simpson, managing director of GEC, follows growing impatience at the slow pace of European defence and aerospace consolidation. GEC expects to seal its defence electronics joint venture between Marconi and Alenia of Italy before the 31 March deadline set by the British, French and German governments for Europe's defence industries to produce a firm restructuring plan.

GEC would eventually like to take control of the Alenia joint venture which will be worth an estimated £2bn. But it is deeply sceptical about the prospects for progress in European-wide aerospace restructuring elsewhere.

The two US defence businesses that GEC is eyeing up are Litton Industries and ITT Industries, which are valued respectively at \$2.8bn (£1.7bn) and \$4bn. However, rising US stock markets have made both businesses expensive takeover propositions. In addition, Litton has an extensive

warship building business, in which GEC is not interested, while ITT has a big automotive division making brake and chassis systems, which GEC would need to dispose of.

GPT, the telecoms joint venture with Siemens, is reckoned by analysts to be worth about £2bn, meaning it would cost GEC £800m to buy out the German group's 40 per cent stake.

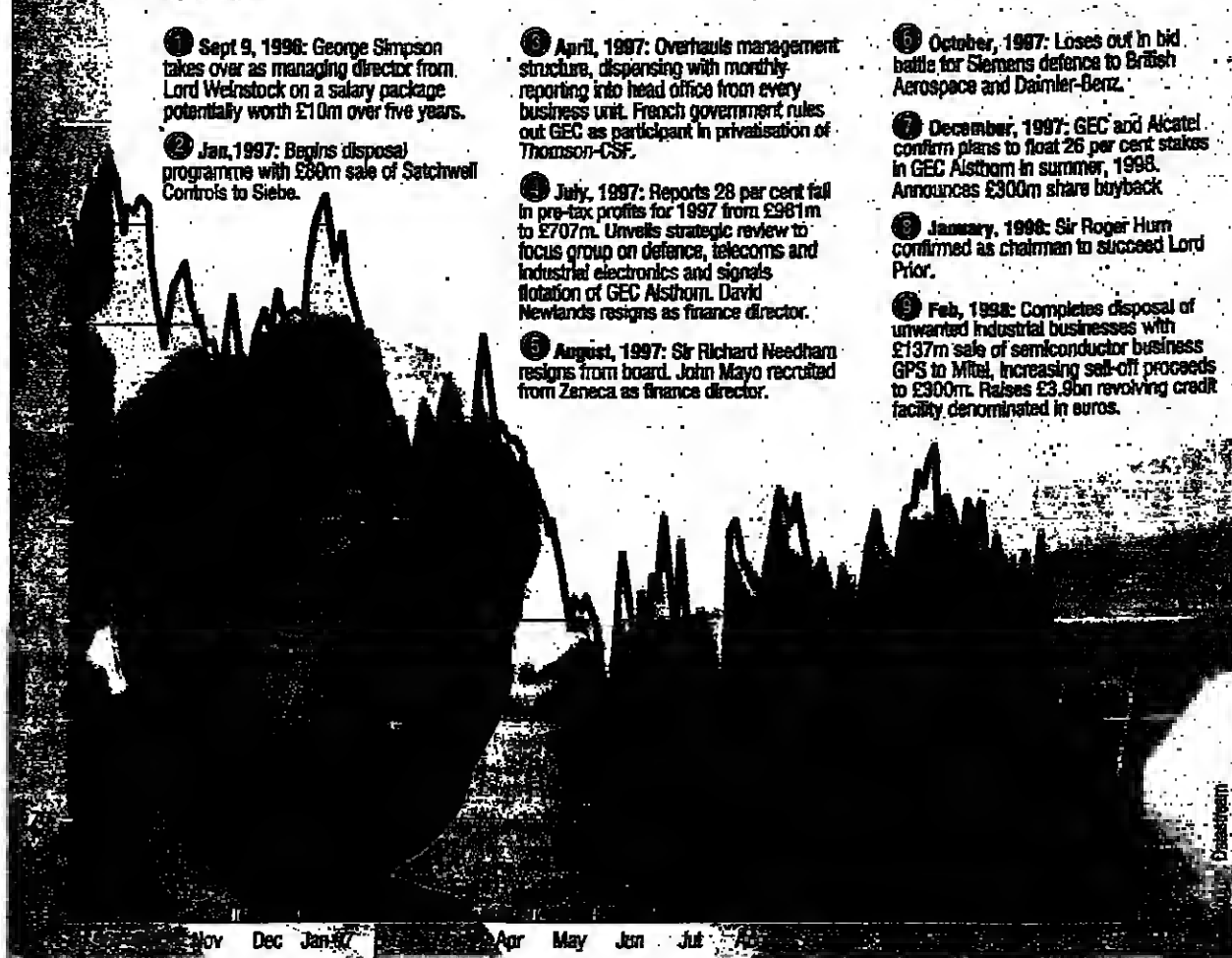
Discussions have made a certain amount of progress since Lord Simpson launched his strategic review of GEC last July. But they are bogged down by what one insider described as Siemens' "inertia and conservatism". Although the two companies are partners, Siemens also regards GPT as a competitor to its own telecoms businesses. The joint venture recently lost a £300m order from Belgium because of Siemens' refusal to supply technological know-how to GPT.

The four industrial electronics businesses are Picker, which makes medical imaging systems, Gilbarco, the world's largest petrol-pump manufacturer, Videotek Systems, which makes inkjet printers, and the weighing and instrumentation business Avery Berkel. Together the businesses have sales of about £1.5bn a year. In the first half of this year Picker, Gilbarco and Videotek made pre-tax profits of £59m on sales of £600m while Avery Berkel improved profits substantially due to a restructuring. GEC would ideally like to build two of the four companies into world-scale businesses and dispose of the other two.

Last month GEC raised £3.9bn through a revolving credit facility, the first to be de-

Lord Simpson's battle to revive defence giant

Against FT All share index



ominated in euros. It also has £1.2bn of net cash in the group and expects to raise a further £1bn when it floats 26 per cent of its stake in GEC Alstom, the power and transportation joint venture, this June. Disposals of unwanted industrial businesses have netted £300m and although GEC's share in the domestic appliances joint venture, which makes Hotpoint washing machines, will also be sold eventually, the difficulty will be extracting an acceptable price from GE.

The combination of credit facilities and cash would give GEC more than enough firepower to buy out Siemens and acquire one of its US defence targets. How-

ever, the group is continuing to examine whether it should proceed with a merger with British Aerospace.

Lord Simpson is thought to see certain advantages in a merger. The combined group would have sales of £19bn, giving it sufficient scale to compete with the US defence giants Raytheon, Lockheed Martin and Boeing. It would also demonstrate to the French that Britain was serious about consolidation.

But Lord Simpson has yet to be persuaded that it would unlock shareholder value for GEC, now that a merger would be much closer to a marriage of equals, BAE having increased in value five-fold to

£8.2bn in the last five years. Over the same period GEC has increased in value by less than a third to £11bn.

Since Lord Simpson took over from Lord Weinstock in September 1996, GEC shares have underperformed the market by nearly a quarter. Lord Simpson's bonus payments, which could bring him a £10m pay packet over five years, are only triggered if GEC outperforms the market by 10 per cent for a period of three years and remains in the top quartile of the FTSE100 judged on total shareholder return. Nevertheless, Lord Simpson still earned £1.1m for seven months work in 1996-97 including a discretionary bonus of £160,000.

Rolls-Royce shrugs off threat of US alliance

By Michael Harrison

ROLLS-ROYCE yesterday shrugged off the threat of closer co-operation between its two US aero-engine rivals as it posted record profits and promised five years of double-digit earnings growth.

Sir Ralph Robins, the Rolls chairman, said he would resist a merger between General Electric and Pratt & Whitney since he said the two would "row like hell". It would also leave Rolls as the only alternative to complete American domination of the civil engine market.

Sir Ralph said that consolidation of Europe's engine manufacturers was not essential in the way that it was for aircraft companies since Rolls was already a dominant force, but he did not rule out the possible integration of MTU, Daimler-Benz's engine division.

Shares in Rolls rose 7 per cent to 252.5p as the company reported a 17 per cent jump in underlying profits last year to £276m and said it expected approval to raise the limit on foreign shareholdings to 49.5 per cent in the next two to three weeks.

Sir Ralph also painted a hazy picture of Rolls prospects, saying the Asian downturn would only cause a moderate slowdown in orders intake this year while the order book now stood at a total of £10.1bn.

Rolls is gearing up for a further 20 per cent increase in output this year after lifting engine deliveries by 50 per cent to 1,400 last year and seeing high-margin spares sales rise 15 per cent. The group is expected to invest a further £230m building up its capacity at Derby and Bristol.

Last year Rolls took 34 per cent of all civil engine orders against only 13 per cent for Pratt & Whitney and dominated the market for engines for the new wide-bodied twin the Airbus A330 and Boeing 777, the Trent capturing 80 per cent of all orders.

Stock markets take a bath after Intel profit warning

By David Osborne in New York
By Stephen Vines in Hong Kong
By Diane Coyle in London

WORLD stock markets got an unexpected dash of cold water yesterday thanks to lower-than-expected profit estimates from Intel Corporation, the computer chip maker. It was not, however, quite the tech-wreck that some had feared.

Stocks suffered yesterday in Asia and Europe and later in New York in reaction to the news from Intel, released after the close of trading on Wall Street on Wednesday.

In London the FTSE-100 index ended 38 points lower at 5,695.6. There was caution but no panic, as dealers noted that share prices had hit all-time highs at the beginning of the week. The FTSE 100 reached 5,846.9 on Monday.

High technology stocks suffered across Europe as a result of the Intel warning, with shares in companies such as France's SGS-Thomson Microelectronics and Germany's Siemens falling sharply. Earlier, the fear of weakness on Wall Street had hit Asia, and especially Hong Kong. Intel was itself the main victim of the sell-off yesterday. Its early trading in stock was down 16 per cent on the Nasdaq market.

The damage was confirmation of Intel's status as the ultimate bell-wether stock for the technology sector, with its

processors packaged in 85 per cent of all PCs in existence.

Intel had earlier said it expected first quarter results to be flat after fourth quarter revenues of \$6.5bn (£3.9bn). It is now warning that it may come in about 10 per cent short of that number, which would mean revenues at their lowest since the third quarter of 1996.

Blame for the fall-off lay primarily with unexpectedly sluggish demand for chips from the PC industry. Analysts said that was in part explained by an inventory hang-over from Christmas. Other factors might include the continuing economic crisis in Asia, where many US technology companies have large exposure.

Some analysts saw more fundamental problems for Intel, notably its slow response to growth in demand for PCs costing \$1,000 or less where it has faced tough competition from two other chip makers, Advanced Micro Devices and Cyrix.

In April, however, it is due to come out with its Celeron chip, specifically aimed at the lower end of the market. PC makers might be waiting for the arrival of the new chip.

Among other companies that saw damage to their stocks in New York yesterday were Hewlett-Packard, Dell Computer, IBM and Microsoft. None of those suffered dramatic losses, however.

The Dow Jones industrial average suffered a second day of decline after a month of almost unbroken gains. But while the index was down nearly 70 points at the lunch-hour, it also seemed to be resisting the downward pressure better than some had expected.

Even so, there was a ripple effect on other stock markets.

A massive sell-off of shares in Hong Kong caused a 547 point, or almost 5 per cent, dive in the blue-chip Hang Seng index.

The decline, bigger than in most other Asian markets, was triggered by a spell of profit-taking following the market's relatively strong performance last month, and in anticipation of further weakness on Wall Street.

The flow of bad news in Hong Kong is far from over. On Wednesday the government revealed that there had been a massive outflow of Hongkong dollar deposits.

Some HK\$62bn (£4.8bn) or almost 4 per cent of all Hongkong dollar deposits, was withdrawn in October, another HK\$17bn came out the following month and HK\$34bn in January.

The potential nightmare is that massive withdrawals of Hongkong dollar deposits will undermine the currency board system, which requires full foreign currency backing for every Hongkong dollar issued.



Screens in Kuala Lumpur where prices stabilised yesterday after being shaken by bank troubles Reuters

Continuing fears of regional contagion also took their toll. There was concern over reports that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) might delay payment of the next tranche of the Indonesian bailout. In Korea political uncertainty contributed to a 6.5 per cent fall in share prices.

Meanwhile, Eisuke Sakakibara, Japan's vice-finance minister, was on a South East Asian tour where he discussed tying the region's currencies to the Japanese yen instead of the US dollar.

Fear of MPC split as Bank sticks by 7.25% interest rate

By Diane Coyle
Economies Editor

THE Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) opted not to raise interest rates yesterday in what most observers reckoned must have been a close vote - perhaps even a 4-4 split requiring the casting vote of Eddie George, the Governor.

While it proved to be no distraction for the stock market's woes, the announcement brought huge relief to industry.

Kate Barker, chief economist at the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), said growth was already slowing as the five rate rises since last May took effect. Ruth Lea, at the Institute of Directors, said: "Interest rates are now probably high enough to contain inflationary pressures."

However, the pound per seversely climbed back above the DM3.00 barrier, in reaction to hints of a cut in German interest rates.

The MPC made its decision in the light of an outline of the general Budget stance given by the Treasury's observer at its meetings. Last week the Chancellor of the Exchequer stressed there would be no let up on fiscal prudence in the Budget on 17 March.

The Committee also had new signals of buoyant consumer spending yesterday. The CBI's monthly survey of the high street suggested a slowdown in retail sales during February but a buoyant underlying

trend. This followed an earlier survey showing resilient activity in the service industries, suggesting the impact of the strong pound on manufacturing tipped the MPC's verdict.

According to the CBI, the balance of retailers reporting increased sales dipped to 33 per cent from 36 per cent in February, while expectations for March also declined. But the three-month trend and year-on-year rate of growth picked up. In addition retailers' investment plans bounced sharply to a level even higher than during the late-1980s boom.

Alastair Eperon, chairman of the CBI's distributive trades panel, said: "The underlying trend shows that sales growth is holding up well," although he added that trading conditions were very competitive.

Oddly, in the light of Wednesday's warnings from furniture retailers DFS and MFI, the survey showed this sector doing particularly well. Footwear was the only one to report a drop in sales.

Separately, the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders said new car registrations jumped to 177,133 in February, 8.3 per cent up on the same month a year earlier. The SMMT said this continued the trend of recent months.

But the Retail Motor Industry Federation said the figures were unsustainable, and predicted that registrations this year would be lower than last year's "exceptionally high" 2.17 million.

Smiths confirms Menzies stores talks

By Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

WH Smith confirmed yesterday that it is in talks with John Menzies to buy the group's high street newsagent stores in a deal which analysts said could be worth £80m. Smiths is understood to be in exclusive negotiations with Menzies to buy its 232 outlets which were put up for sale in January.

Smiths' intervention seems certain to end the interest of Alchemy, the venture capital group, that had previously been the front runner with a £55m offer.

Smith's shares fell 6.5p to 492.5p, as some analysts said the group should focus on the problems in its own core chain rather than expanding it. There were also concerns that the bid might reduce the possible £250m that the group had been expected to return to shareholders.

Nick Bobb at SG Securities said: "It would be disappointing if Smith's weren't interested. It is not going to break the bank and should not prove too much of a distraction."

Menzies' main attraction for Smiths is its 92 stores in Scotland where Smiths has no representation. Another draw is its 50 outlets in railway stations and airports. If Smiths does acquire Menzies it is likely to re-brand the stores under the WH Smith name in England and Wales but keep them as Menzies in Scotland. There may be some store closures and there could be cuts at the Edinburgh head office where almost 200 people are employed.

The deal is likely to be scrutinised by the competition authorities which are likely to focus on the combined group's market shares in the newspaper and magazine markets and in railway and airport locations.

STOCK MARKETS

Indices	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	5695.60	-37.50	-0.65	5850.00	4189.10	3.23
FTSE 250	5227.80	-40.90	-0.78	5289.80	4384.20	3.00
FTSE 350	2731.10	-18.80	-0.68	2796.50	2075.70	3.16
FTSE All Share	2861.11	-17.44	-0.61	2720.99	2056.87	3.16
FTSE SmallCap	2482.10	-8.70	-0.35	2488.70	2182.10	2.80
FTSE MidCap	1356.00	-2.00	-0.15	1360.00	1225.20	2.18
FTSE AIM	1013.10	-6.10	-0.61	1135.50	968.50	0.98
Dow Jones	8477.96	-61.25	-0.72	8585.08	6356.78	1.65
Nikkei	16848.55	-247.05	-1.46	20810.79	14498.21	0.91
Hang Seng	10803.88	-247.13	-2.28	16820.31	7909.13	3.49
Dax	4623.40	-86.18	-1.83	4782.84	3192.33	1.65

INTEREST RATES

Short sterling	UK 10 year gilt	US long bond
3 months 1 yr 5 yr	1 yr 5 yr 10 yr	1 yr 5 yr 10 yr
UK 7.50 1.33 7.50 0.85 6.06 -1.24 6.03 -1.46	US 5.69 0.13 5.81 -0.22 5.74 -0.83 6.04 -0.78	Japan 0.75 0.24 0.71 0.13 1.84 -0.71 2.48 -0.72
Germany 3.62 0.27 3.80 0.50 5.02 -0.63 5.61 -0.84		

CURRENCIES

£/\$	DM/£	¥/£
at 5pm	at 5pm	at 5pm
Dollar 1.6450 -0.20c 1.6114	Sterling 0.6073 +0.07p 0.6206	D-Mark 1.8270 +1.15p 1.7120
D-Mark 3.0081 +1.54p 2.7600	Yen 127.78 +1.01 121.22	Yen 127.78 +1.01 121.22
Yen 210.20 +1.33 195.71		
£ Index 105.40 0.00 98.40	\$ Index 106.50 0.00 104.10	

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.3687
Austria (schillings)	30.40
Belgium (francs)	39.90
Canada (\$)	2.2558
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8473
Denmark (kroner)	8.14
Finland (markka)	8.0999
France (francs)	9.7495
Germany (marks)	2.9365
Greece (drachmas)	460.47
Hong Kong (\$)	0.16
Ireland (pounds)	1.6075
Italy (lire)	2.073
Japan (yen)	207.38
Netherlands (guilder)	2.378
New Zealand (dollars)	2.16
Portugal (escudos)	206.56
Spain (pesetas)	246.4
South Africa (rand)	7.7988
Sweden (kronor)	0.96
Switzerland (francs)	2.754
Turkey (lira)	368.81
USA (\$)	1.626

Shares soar as US giant makes bid for More

SHARES in Mure Group surged 190p to 1024p yesterday – a 25 per cent leap – as the outdoor advertising group revealed a 1042.5p a share agreed cash bid from Clear Channel Communications, the US media giant.

The offer values More at £446m, a 54 per cent premium to the average price of More shares in the 12 months before the announcement. However, the price is a premium of just 25 per cent over Wednesday's closing share price.

Last night, the Stock Exchange was understood to be investigating trading in More shares in the run-up to yesterday's announcement. In the previous two weeks, the shares had risen by more than 10 per cent, suggesting that news of the bid had leaked into the market.

Roger Parry, More's chief executive, said the two companies had been in discussions since Christmas. "At 1042.5p a share we could just not say no," he said. "It's a huge premium."

Mr Parry said the offer would create the largest outdoor advertising group in the world, with operations in 34 countries. In the past few years, Clear Channel has spent \$4bn (£2.4bn) acquiring companies in that market. The company, which is listed on the Nasdaq stock exchange, also runs 173 radio and 18 television stations.

More operates more than 90,000 fixed advertising panels around the world. It also specialises in other forms of outdoor advertising including public transport and bus shelters, and supplies other street furniture such as public lavatories.

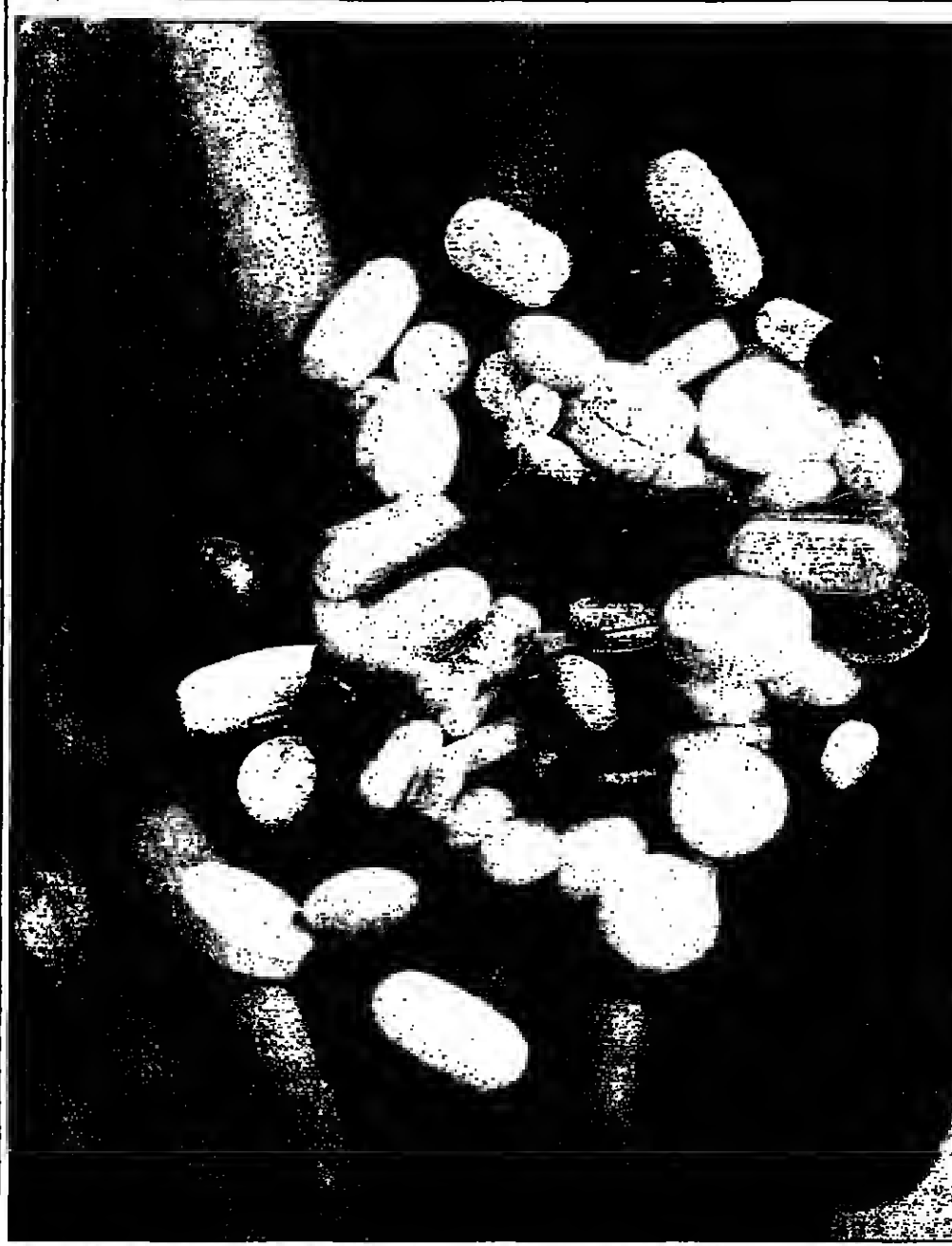
Mr Parry insisted that the bid would lead to no immediate job losses at the group, which employs 1,000 people around the world. "There will be no redundancies and no change," he said, arguing that the bid was largely a way for Clear Channel to establish a presence in continental Europe. He said the company was also prepared to back further expansion by More. In November 1996, More spent £78m on an outdoor advertising group in Sweden. It has also recently moved into Belgium and France. "Clear Channel will give us an extremely low cost of capital," said Mr Parry.

Lowry Mais, Clear Channel's chairman and chief executive, said he was "impressed" with More's management team.

More will be able to use Clear Channel's network to build up its business in the US. Adshel, its display advertising group which supplies many of the bus shelters in British towns, has recently been awarded a huge £1bn 30-year contract to supply all the outdoor advertising in New York City.

Mr Parry said that Clear Channel was not the first company to have approached More about the possibility of making a bid. But analysts said Clear Channel's offer, which values the shares at 24 times 1997 earnings, was unlikely to be bettered by a rival bidder.

The move came as Mure unveiled a 39 per cent increase in pre-tax profits to £25.5m on sales up 41 per cent to £144m. Clear Channel's bid includes the 12.5p final dividend, which will be paid to shareholders as normal.



Bitter pill: Zeneca said it was determined to maintain its independence

Zeneca stands up for independence

By Andrew Yates

ZENECA, the third-largest drugs group in the UK, said yesterday it was determined to maintain its independence and had not entered into any merger or takeover talks with rivals.

Sir David Barnes, Zeneca's chief executive, said that any competitor would have to be prepared to pay a substantial premium for control of Zeneca.

His comments come in response to intense speculation surrounding Zeneca's future after merger talks between Glaxo Wellcome and SmithKline Beecham broke down last week. The two drugs giants have been seen as natural predators for Zeneca in a turbulent industry undergoing rapid consolidation. However they are thought to be unlikely to be willing to pay a high premium for the company.

Zeneca, which had risen to new highs on takeover speculation, fell 105p to 2505p before recovering in late trading to end up 5p at 2615p.

SmithKline's shares jumped 43p to 780p on mounting speculation that it could be on the receiving end of a hostile bid. Glaxo is still sounding out its institutional shareholders about a deal and is rumoured to be ready to strike. There were also talks in the market yesterday that other drugs rivals, especially in the US, were also showing a keen interest in SmithKline after it two failed attempts to find a partner within a month.

Sir David said: "I do not believe that Zeneca's shareholders will easily part with their shares except at a substantial premium to where they are trading today."

He insisted that Zeneca did not need a partner and that the group's organic growth was better than Glaxo's and SmithKline's. "Compared to our competitors our performance is pretty good," he said.

Zeneca plans to increase its expenditure on research and development from £443m to £500m this year, to compete with the likes of Glaxo and SmithKline. It is also on the look out for acquisitions. "If we can find the right opportunity - we have a strong un-gearred balance sheet - we will move," said Sir David.

However, he questioned the rationale of the Glaxo-SmithKline deal, suggesting that the idea of creating a research and development giant just meant that the larger group was under more pressure to produce blockbuster drugs on a more regular basis.

Overall, Zeneca yesterday announced a 7 per cent rise in profits to £1.08bn in 1997. With 90 per cent of its business overseas, the strength of the pound wiped £178m off earnings. Ignoring this currency impact profits rose 24 per cent, well above the 15 per cent target Zeneca has set itself.

Underlying profits at the pharmaceutical division rose 17 per cent, thanks to the launch of Accolate, an asthma pill, Seroquel, the anti-psychotic treatment, and Zomig, the migraine drug. Pharmaceutical margins were flat as Zeneca launched a consumer advertising campaign and beefed up its sales force in the intensely competitive US market. The results were in line with City expectations. However Zeneca said currency would cost it about another £89m this year.

Hillsdown board considers de-merger

By Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

HILLSDOWN Holdings, the

Hartley jams and Typhoo tea group, yesterday became the latest food company to announce plans that could lead to a break up or de-merger. Alongside flat full year profits of £153m, the company said it has established a board committee to

consider the group's structure and report to shareholders at the annual meeting in May.

Analysts expect Hillsdown to de-merge or sell its non-food interests which include Fairview Homes, a housebuilder, and the Christie Tyler furniture business.

While some observers said the group could follow Dalgety and break itself up entirely, most analysts said Hillsdown

was likely to retain its under-performing foods interests which offer the most room for improvement.

Rival food groups such as Unilever, United Biscuits, Dalgety and Perkins Foods have recently all announced restructuring plans or sell-offs.

Hillsdown has been under pressure for years to reduce its collection of disparate businesses

and it still has 10 operating companies. Its shares have underperformed the market by more than 30 per cent since the beginning of 1997 and the management, led by George Greener, has said there will be "no holy cows" in the committee's analysis.

Mr Greener said he hoped the businesses might fetch a strategic premium like Dalgety

achieved with its Spiller's pet-foods operation. Sally Jones, at Credit Lyonnais Laing said this was unlikely. "Who would want to pay a premium for jams, canning and biscuits?"

Analysts said the break-up value of Dalgety could be as high as 200p per share, indicating a value of £1.45bn. This compared to yesterday's closing price of 169p, up 5p.

Hillsdown has already sold a string of businesses in areas such as red meat and leather tanning. Yesterday it announced profits up £3m to £153m on sales of £2.6bn. Furniture and housebuilding improved profits from £41m to £62m. But profits fell in general foods which includes biscuits and jams. Profits in poultry and potatoes also fell. The dividend was held at 7.8p.

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY ANDREW YATES

BTR set for a new dawn

IAN STRACHAN has made five results presentations to the City since taking over as chief executive of BTR just over two years ago. The previous four times, investors gave him presentation of BTR's strategy and prospects the thumbs up, only to find themselves on the end of a profit warning a few months later. Over the same time, the reformed conglomerate's shares have lost 45 per cent of their value.

As a result it's no surprise that investors reacted cautiously to yesterday's full-year results, pushing the shares down 4.5p to 187p. The figures were in line with expectations after last December's profit warning. Sales from the engineering group – the businesses BTR intends to keep – rose by 11 per cent to £4.9bn when adjusted for the stronger pound, while operating profits slipped to £774m, down 2 per cent on a constant currency basis.

Mr Strachan likes to talk about BTR as a focused growth engineer, leading its markets and expanding its sales by constantly developing innovative products. But while he can give convincing examples of BTR subsidiaries doing just that, the numbers paint a different picture. In three of BTR's four key divisions, profits fell while sales increased. And the 8 per cent profit hike in Control Systems was largely down to the first-time inclusion of recent acquisitions.

BTR argues that these drops are down to specific factors: turmoil in South East Asia, sterling squeezing exports, and cost overruns on signalling for the Jubilee line. But there is a broader trend. Slowly but surely, Mr Strachan is changing the old BTR culture of concentrating on niche markets, expanding margins as far as they will go and never investing. The problem is that, while the supernovae is being turned around, BTR's profit margins will fall. Last year, the company's engineering businesses made a return on sales of 15.8 per cent. In the long term, they will end up some way lower.

So what is BTR worth? Monday's £2.2bn sale of the packaging businesses wiped out net debt, while the remaining peripheral assets should raise at least another £1bn. That means BTR's continuing operations currently trade on a PE ratio of less than 10. Given the added comfort that Mr Strachan has already pledged to give £2bn back to shareholders, the share price rating looks undemanding even if BTR pro-

BTR: At a glance

Market value: £7.61bn, share price 187p (-4.5p)

Five-year record	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Turnover (£bn)	9.77	9.44	9.78	9.53	8.08
Pre-tax profits (£bn)	1.27	1.41	1.50	0.86	1.28
Earnings per share (p)	23.8	24.5	26.0	10.7	21.6
Dividends per share (p)	12.3	14.8	16.1	12.0	9.50

Operating Profit



Share price



Source: Datastream

duces no profit growth at all in the coming two years. There have been many false dawns, but this really does look like the bottom for BTR. Buy.

Enterprise Oil's bright prospects

IT IS HARD for an ebullient Belgian like Pierre Jungels to underplay the performance of Enterprise Oil. But the group's chief executive probably did so yesterday when talking about prospects for the UK's biggest exploration production company. The 1997 financial results were down, pummeled by falling crude prices. Pre-tax profits slumped 28 per cent to £255m but the after-tax profit, more relevant to an exploration stock, only fell from £142m to £127m. The results were in line with ex-

pectations, but Mr Jungels certainly did not gloss over the problem of the sub \$14 per barrel oil price. He expected a number of projects that Enterprise is involved in to be hit, including the giant Clair Field where it has a 15 per cent stake. Compared with the frothy presentation given by Lamsco last week this was dour stuff but Enterprise is anything but a dour company. It is conservatively managed but is sitting on what should be an exciting future. There were no big oil finds in 1997 but the company has already been lucky in 1998 and with 30 wells being drilled this year there should be more good news. Enterprise's future production profile looks very promising and reserves are up 13 per cent on last year.

Best of all Enterprise still has a very low cost base. It let costs rise slightly last year and this affected profitability, but it has launched a crackdown and can still operate vastly more cheaply than most of its peers. Enterprise has

also got its eggs in the right basket. Its core areas of activity are the UK and Norwegian sectors of the North Sea, US Gulf and the increasingly hopeful Italy.

This year's financial performance depends on what happens to the oil price. Even on the most optimistic forecasts Enterprise, whose shares fell 8p to 579p, is trading on a steep multiple of 28. That said future prospects look good. If you think oil prices will recover strongly, then Enterprise should be one for the investment portfolio.

Ladbroke looks a sure-fire bet

WHAT a difference a few years makes. When Ladbroke warned in November 1995 that the National Lottery was hammering its betting shop business, its shares slumped to a low of 123p. Since then it has not looked back. Along with the rest of the betting industry it has mounted an impressive fightback against the Lottery, introducing successful new number games like 49s. Its Hilton hotels business has boomed on the back of a buoyant industry around the world. Last year, underlying profits jumped 39 per cent to £226m.

So can Ladbroke keep up this cracking pace? A marketing agreement with Hilton International of the US to unify the brand around the world has raised speculation that the two will form a closer bond. However both sides have ruled out a merger for the foreseeable future due to, among other things, tax problems. And there is still no sign of the US group keeping its promise to buy at least a 5 per cent stake in Ladbroke. That said, the existing tie-up should be a lucrative one, and should begin to pay off over the next few years. And while Ladbroke lost out on the big prize of Inter-Continental hotels to Bass, there is still scope to pick up plenty of smaller acquisitions.

An MMC enquiry into its acquisition of the Coral betting chain is on the cards, and Ladbroke may well have to give up more sites than it would like to. However the deal should still bring substantial long-term benefits.

Ladbroke's shares remained unchanged at 308p yesterday in a falling market. NatWest Securities forecasts current year profits of £268m, putting the shares on a prospective PE ratio of 18. It is difficult to bet against Ladbroke given its recent track record but the shares look about right for now.

Great Universal steps up pressure on Argos

GREAT Universal Stores increased the pressure on Argos yesterday when it criticised management for failing to deliver profit growth and delivering a "catalogue of disappointments instead." GUS, which is bidding £1.6bn for Argos, told shareholders: "We suggest they ask their independent financial adviser what he or she believes the Argos share price would have been today without the GUS offer." In response Argos said: "If Argos is really running out of steam as GUS claims, why is it so keen to take it off shareholders' hands?" Argos shares were still trading well above the GUS offer of 570p yesterday. They closed 5p lower at 609p.

Mirror Group in sale talks

IRELAND's Independent Newspapers and Mirror Group, the UK media group, yesterday confirmed that they were in talks about their stakes in *The Independent* and the *Independent on Sunday* newspapers. The Irish company, headed by Tony O'Reilly, broke its silence amid reports that it was looking to double its stake in Newspaper Publishing, which owns the Independent titles, by buying Mirror Group's 46 per cent stake in the firm. Mr O'Reilly's company currently owns 46 per cent of Newspaper Publishing.

Laura Ashley reduces stake

LAURA Ashley, the troubled furnishings retailer, plans to sell a 13 per cent stake in Laura Ashley Japan to Jusco Co Ltd for £9.5m. The sale will reduce Laura Ashley's stake in Laura Ashley Japan to 26.7 per cent from 39.7 per cent. Jusco, Laura Ashley's Japanese joint venture partner, will increase its stake to 72.3 per cent.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Argo Wiggins Appleton (£53.2m)	216.1m (133.8m)	16.1p (10.2p)	6.0p (7.5p)	
Balfour Beatty (N)	0.38m (0.32m)	-0.82m (-17.84p)	-4.7p (-2.5p)	
BTR (F)	7.44m (6.88m)	1.07m (1.19m)	21.6p (21.3p)	9.5p
Country Stores (F)	48.5m (34.7m)	3.51m (2.27m)	15.3p (10.2p)	1.85p (1.5p)
Enterprise (F)	1.52m (2.00m)	-112.5m (-120.8m)	-16.4p (11.2p)	3.5p (8p)
Enterprise Oil (F)	946.9m (911m)	254.8m (255.4m)	21p (25p)	17.4p (17p)
Galvint (F)	73.05m (68.85m)	0.764m (0.522m)	0.38p (0.28p)	0.5p
Harvey (F)	2.48m (2.50m)	244.7m (207.4m)	23.0p (22.8p)	12p
Hillsdown (F)	2.65m (2.57m)	153m (150m)	19p (15.7p)	10p (10p)
Ladbroke (F)	3.82m (3.82m)	226.3m (163.8m)	14.0p (10.44p)	8.82p (8.2p)
Mare Group (F)	144.4m (102.7)	25.5m (18.2m)	43.3p (35.0p)	16.4p (15p)
Retail Systems (F)	3.28m (2.18m)	0.837m (0.296m)	6.9p (2.6p)	nt
Seaton Group (F)	1.16m (1.14m)	302.2m (33.0m)	157.3p (28.2p)	16.5p (15.2p)
Sheahan Holdings (F)	- (F)	7.8m (8.1m)	10.1p (8.1p)	4.5p (4p)
Frederick (F)	23.05m (18.87m)	0.618m (0.716m)	1.40p (1.13p)	0.40p (0.30p)
Reidmiller (F)	43.05m (33.7m)	0.75m (10.7m)	8.5p (10.8p)	3.32p (2.80p)
Sella-Heyes (F)	4.33m (2.90m)	275m (4.22m)	15.18p (3.18p)	5.80p (5.30p)
Royal & Sun	- (F)	880m (940m)	35.3p (37.7p)	21p (19p)
Standerone (F)	6.62m (6.02m)	14.65m (12.30m)	27.7p (24.30p)	5.22p (4.8p)
Stanfield Ltd (F)	5.46m (1.08m)	-3.15m (-0.190m)	-4.35p (-1.55p)	
Stallone (F)	17.8m (10.0m)	1.2m (0.5m)	10.2p (8.8p)	2.5p (1.0p)
Zimmer (F)	5.19m (5.32m)	1.28m (1.01m)	77.0p (70.5p)	30.5p (35p)
(F) - Final (F) - Interim				

Astec three take Emerson to court

REUTERS - Three minority shareholders in the power conversion company Astec (BSR) are taking Emerson Electric, the 51 per cent US stakeholder, to court over its plan to oust Astec board members and buy out the minority stakes, a spokesman for the investors' groups said yesterday.

A statement from the minorities said a petition had been filed at the High Court on Wednesday night.

The shareholders, financial institutions Electra Fleming, Norwich Union and Equitable Life, last night presented a petition to the High Court under section 459 of the Companies Act, which deals with action perceived as being prejudicial to shareholders.

A source close to the minorities said a further four institutional shareholders – Royal & Sun Alliance, Clerical Medical, Credit Suisse Asset Management and the Church Commissioners – plan to sign up to the court action. Together these seven shareholders represent 14.7 per cent of Astec shares.

The source said a total of 20 minority shareholders representing about 25 per cent of Astec stock have set up a "fighting fund" to share costs of any court action.

Emerson is offering the shareholders 111p per share for their holdings, arguing that it needs to buy out the minorities to address "commercial challenges" faced by Astec, particularly in Asia.

At an extraordinary shareholders meeting next Monday, Emerson plans to vote through its board changes. It has also said that it wants to block future dividend payments "for as long as it considers such payments to be contrary to the best interests of Astec and its shareholders".

The minorities and the independent Astec directors Emerson wants to oust say this offer is inadequate. Astec directors also argue that there is no need to suspend dividend payments.

SmithKline moves back into the bid ward

MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

SHARES of SmithKline Beecham jumped as Glaxo Wellcome trailed around the City meeting fund managers. In busy trading they climbed 43p to 780p, their best level since the aborted £100bn-plus merger with Glaxo.

With the investment meetings leaving Glaxo down 27p at 1,622p the obvious assumption was that the drugs giant was edging nearer to mounting a hostile bid for its erstwhile partner.

Glaxo is known to be considering the possibility of a takeover. Putting such a bid together is, however, fraught with difficulties. And the message emerging from the meetings did not, according to some stock market men, support the theory of a Glaxo assault.

Glaxo's rumoured reluctance raised the possibility that American activity could re-appear. Before the Glaxo talks SB had agreed a merger with American Home Products. Although such a deal is unlikely to be resuscitated following the bad feeling caused by SB's behaviour, other US groups could be interested.

There is a widespread view in the drugs industry that SB's two failed mergers have left the group, if reluctantly, holding a for sale sign. Its shares hit 845p at the height of the Glaxo excitement. A year ago they were 424p.

The rest of the market drew some strength from the unchanged base rate decision but had to contend with worries about New York, which although weak was less depressed than anticipated.

Footsie, at one time down 104 points, closed 37.5 lower at 5,695.6p. Supporting indices also gave ground.

Banks were hit by NatWest Securities. It downgraded its recommendations on Halifax and Alliance & Leicester to sell and moved its stance on Lloyds TSB, Northern Rock and Abbey National from add to hold. Said NatWest's Mark

Eady: "Our evaluation model is saying quite a few of them are a bit puny".

Halifax, after falling 20p, ended 2p lower at 923p and A&L ended 2p higher at 904.5p after falling 34.5p.

Lloyds lost 5p at 880p; NR fell 22.5p to 611.5p and Abbey 5p to 1,148p. National Westminster Bank, NatWest's former parent, gave 3p to 1,053p. Other banks lowered included HSBC, 55p to 1,705p, and Bank of Scotland, 25p to 632p.

Telephones had their wires crossed on the expected Mopacopolis & Mergers Commission inquiry into mobile charges. BT fell 13p to 592p and Vodafone lost 20p at 516p. Cable and Wireless softened 13.5p to 545.5p but Orange responded with a 3p gain to 328p, saying the probe will make little impact.

Computer shares suffered on the back of the profits warning from US chip maker Intel. Sage softened 62.5p to

1,232.5p and Mips fell 60p to 2,665p. Wednesday's profit warnings continued to extract their toll. DFS Furniture fell a further 24.5p to 439p and chemical group Meconic slumped 70p to 207.5p.

Arjo Wiggins Appleton, the packaging and paper group, kept up its revival, gaining 11.5p to 198p on a 61 per cent profit advance to £216.1m.

David S Smith moved ahead a further 2p to 217.5p. Arcadia, the retailer, retreated 13.5p to 487.5p following Morgan Stanley caution. Next, still smarting from Great Universal Stores apparent lack of interest, fell a further 22p to 712p.

Rolls-Royce, on its figures, was the best performing blue chip, up 16.5p to 252.5p. PowerGen recovered 30p to 790p on Goldman Sachs support and waters were firmer with Thames Water up 28p to 886p.

Safeway, the supermarket chain, was hoisted 13.5p to 387p on renewed bid hopes and Schroders responded to Morgan Stanley bid talk with a 75p gain to 2,230p.

More, the advertising group, soared 19p to 1,024p on the agreed £446m US bid, other advertising groups improved with Maiden up 42.5p to 366p.

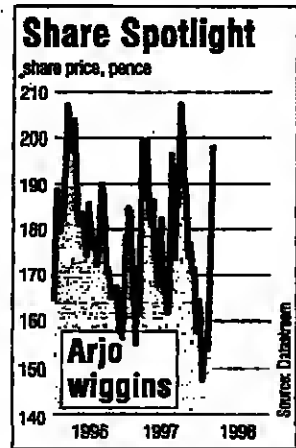
Airtours, the holidays group, added 8p to 468p on

it is thought, ABN Amro encouragement.

Magnam Power surged a further 6.25p to 207.5p on incorrect suggestions stockbroker Colin Blackburn had built a stake; Springwood, the leisure group, jumped 24p to 132.5p, responding to the Charles Stanley profit estimates.

Staveley Industries firmed to 130p. The salt to measuring equipment group is one of the targets of Sir Ron Brierley's Guinness Peat. It lifted its holding to 12.2 per cent, acquiring one million shares. Guinness is bidding for Bluebird Toys after building a stake.

ScS Upholstery, a furniture retailer, firmed 2.5p to 142.5p against December's 105p flotation. Three stores are near to opening, lifting the chain to 15 and adding 28p to sell off stage. The stockbroker Collins Stewart increased its profit forecast from £3.7m to £4m.



TAKING STOCK

The BGR restaurant and food group was the toast of AIM, closing at 220p, against a 160p placing by stockbroker Beeson Gregory.

The company, headed by former chief Tony Allan, runs the renowned BGR restaurant in London's Kingsway and has a food division supplying a host of hotels and restaurants, including London's Savoy Hotel and The Ivy.

It intends to develop a chain of fish brasseries and is likely to replicate the Bank formula in other cities.

Many suspect a merger cannot be far away. Prime People, FSD has 25.9 per cent of Prime People and the two are based at London's Butlers Wharf. Now they are presenting their final figures on the same day - next Tuesday.

Other notable moves include the takeover of the BGR restaurant and food group by stockbroker Beeson Gregory.

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Share Price Data																	
Alcoholic Beverages																	
401	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241
402	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241
403	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241
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458	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241
459	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241	241</						

"The reserve replacement ratio looks good at 181 per cent," said Mr Wright, "But it's all old reserves that have been booked, there's no new discoveries."

RENTOKIL Initial said Roger Payne, a regional director, will be appointed finance director designate from the end of 1999 and will replace the present incumbent Christopher Pearce when he retires at the end of 2000. Rentokil added that Ted Brown, Managing Director Region IV will be appointed chief operating officer, as from 1 July and the managing directors of the five regions will report directly to him.

CASH		3 month		LINE STOCKS	
Cash*	Chg	Cash	Chg	LINE stocks	Chg
1946	1150	1461	1462	51	581025
2785	800	2295	2297	7	42940
12265	7030	19885	19935	705	37395
955	200	800	801	21	19925
5370	14500	5490	5490	145	65396
3430	3000	5425	5430	20	5795
10435	3200	1098	1099	31	45925

YEARS		DAYS		COINS	
YEARS	Chg	YEARS	Chg	COINS	Chg
1950	222.65	-185	-425	Knights	239.95
1000	143.85	-120	590	Sow	86.00
101	3.84	-004	090	Nobles	372.25
				Maple Leaf	32020

BARLEY		LIFE		LIFE	
BARLEY	Chg	LIFE	Chg	LIFE	Chg
1950	12300	May/88	7375	May/88	8000
12310	May/88	7575	May/88	8200	May/88
12320	Sept/88	7475	May/88	8200	June/88
7173	7	7	7	87	70

LIFE		LIFE	
LIFE	Chg	LIFE	Chg
1950	12300	May/88	7375
12310	May/88	7575	May/88
12320	Sept/88	7475	May/88
7173	7	7	7

LIFE		LIFE	
LIFE	Chg	LIFE	Chg
1950	12300	May/88	7375
12310	May/88	7575	May/88
12320	Sept/88	7475	May/88
7173	7	7	7

LIFE		LIFE	
LIFE	Chg	LIFE	Chg
1950	12300	May/88	7375
12310	May/88	7575	May/88
12320	Sept/88	7475	May/88
7173	7	7	7

LIFE		LIFE	
LIFE	Chg	LIFE	Chg
1950	12300	May/88	7375
12310	May/88	7575	May/88
12320	Sept/88	7475	May/88
7173	7	7	7

LIFE		LIFE	
LIFE	Chg	LIFE	Chg
1950	12300	May/88	7375
12310	May/88	7575	May/88
12320	Sept/88	7475	May/88
7173	7	7	7

LIFE		LIFE	
LIFE	Chg	LIFE	Chg
1950	12300	May/88	7375
12310	May/88	7575	May/88
12320	Sept/88	7475	May/88
7173	7	7	7

LIFE		LIFE	
LIFE	Chg	LIFE	Chg
1950	12300	May/88	7375
12310	May/88	7575	May/88
12320	Sept/88	7475	May/88
7173	7	7	7

LIFE		LIFE	
LIFE	Chg	LIFE	Chg
1950	12300	May/88	7375
12310	May/88	7575	May/88
12320	Sept/88	7475	May/88
7173	7	7	7

LIFE		LIFE	
LIFE	Chg	LIFE	Chg
1950	12300	May/88	7375
12310	May/88	7575	May/88
12320	Sept/88	7475	May/88
7173	7	7	7

LIFE		LIFE	
LIFE	Chg	LIFE	Chg
1950	12300	May/88	7375
12310	May/88	7575	May/88
12320	Sept/88	7475	May/88
7173	7	7	7

LIFE	
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[illegible]

Ref	Buy	Yld	Fund	Ref	Buy	Yld
10000	10000	4.45	10000	10000	10000	4.45
10001	10001	4.45	10001	10001	10001	4.45
10002	10002	4.45	10002	10002	10002	4.45
10003	10003	4.45	10003	10003	10003	4.45
10004	10004	4.45	10004	10004	10004	4.45
10005	10005	4.45	10005	10005	10005	4.45
10006	10006	4.45	10006	10006	10006	4.45
10007	10007	4.45	10007	10007	10007	4.45
10008	10008	4.45	10008	10008	10008	4.45
10009	10009	4.45	10009	10009	10009	4.45
10010	10010	4.45	10010	10010	10010	4.45
10011	10011	4.45	10011	10011	10011	4.45
10012	10012	4.45	10012	10012	10012	4.45
10013	10013	4.45	10013	10013	10013	4.45
10014	10014	4.45	10014	10014	10014	4.45
10015	10015	4.45	10015	10015	10015	4.45
10016	10016	4.45	10016	10016	10016	4.45
10017	10017	4.45	10017	10017	10017	4.45
10018	10018	4.45	10018	10018	10018	4.45
10019	10019	4.45	10019	10019	10019	4.45
10020	10020	4.45	10020	10020	10020	4.45
10021	10021	4.45	10021	10021	10021	4.45
10022	10022	4.45	10022	10022	10022	4.45
10023	10023	4.45	10023	10023	10023	4.45
10024	10024	4.45	10024	10024	10024	4.45
10025	10025	4.45	10025	10025	10025	4.45
10026	10026	4.45	10026	10026	10026	4.45
10027	10027	4.45	10027	10027	10027	4.45
10028	10028	4.45	10028	10028	10028	4.45
10029	10029	4.45	10029	10029	10029	4.45
10030	10030	4.45	10030	10030	10030	4.45
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10034	10034	4.45	10034	10034	10034	4.45
10035	10035	4.45	10035	10035	10035	4.45
10036	10036	4.45	10036	10036	10036	4.45
10037	10037	4.45	10037	10037	10037	4.45
10038	10038	4.45	10038	10038	10038	4.45
10039	10039	4.45	10039	10039	10039	4.45
10040	10040	4.45	10040	10040	10040	4.45
10041	10041	4.45	10041	10041	10041	4.45
10042	10042	4.45	10042	10042	10042	4.45
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10046	10046	4.45	10046	10046	10046	4.45
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10146	10146	4.45	10146	10146	10146	4.45
10147	10147	4.45	10147	10147	10147	4.45
10148	10148	4.45	10148	10148	10148	4.45
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Wembley welcomes quaking Welshmen

The oval ball brigade have often visited the Twin Towers but Wales must make themselves feel at home when they take on Scotland tomorrow. Chris Hewett reports

ROB HOWLEY'S chastened tribe of Welsh rugby romantics reacquainted themselves with the field of dreams yesterday as they made their final preparations for what has emerged as a watershed Five Nations match against Scotland. Anyone walking past Wembley Stadium might have been forgiven for thinking proceedings had kicked off a day early - the cacophony from the stands was deafening - but a glance down the players' tunnel revealed 75,000 empty seats reverberating to a tape recording of crowd noise.

Like the rest of his countrymen, Howley is acutely aware that a second embarrassing capitulation in the space of a fortnight would have such a deadly effect on national morale that he and his colleagues might easily spend the rest of their careers performing in front of nothing more animated than a large cassette deck and half a dozen loudspeakers.

"You could describe this as a must-win game," acknowledged the skipper, an unusually profound degree of seriousness etched across his Stan Laurel features. On the face of it, of course, Wales have every chance of winning; as the eternal optimists of the valleys point out, no national side from the far bank of the Severn has lost to a British team at Wembley in 15 long and happy years. But then, as the pessimists remind their starry-eyed brethren, Wales have not played a British team at Wembley for 15 years.

Since the football boys went down 2-1 to England in 1983, the red shirts have paid only a single visit to the Twin Towers, for last November's one-off Test with the All Blacks. And the least said about that, the better. Still, the Welsh are up for

Wembley, a stadium they must call "home" and the reconstruction of their beloved Arms Park cathedral is completed in June of next year. "What a surface," Howley mused yesterday. "It's quick, that's the big thing. So quick, in fact, that even the New Zealanders were caught out by it during the last game. A bit of rain makes it dead slippery, but you have to say that it's an absolute treat for anyone who fancies the fast going. I hope the Cardiff surface turns out to be similar."

Seasoned Wembleyites are used to welcoming the funny-shaped ball brigade, of course; the grand old lady of world stadiums has hosted rugby league cup finals since time immemorial, flirted with American football and even opened its hallowed portals to the England rugby union team on a low-key and largely forgotten occasion in 1992 when a certain Ian Hunter slipped a couple of tries past the Canadians on his Test debut.

Tomorrow will be different, though. The harsh realities of professionalism may have left



Moving in: The Welsh rugby union squad enjoy a feel of the lush turf yesterday when training at Wembley for tomorrow's match against Scotland

Photograph: Peter Jay

the Celtic fringe struggling to maintain their collective international credibility, but Five Nations occasions are special and the Welsh remain confident of transporting their traditional ways from the close-knit snugery of central Cardiff to the warehouse-infested commercial wasteland of north London.

Wembley expects something special, too. "Ian Rush said it was every player's dream to score a goal here and Pele described the place as the 'church of football', but I know the union supporters will take something to remember from their stay here," said the stadium manager, Martin Corrie.

"We're not just about football, although that's the impression people have of us. What we do is put on events - sporting events, musical events, you name it - and in my book, a Five Nations match has 'event' written all over it. We have no problems with rugby whatsoever. In fact, we're looking forward with

great excitement to helping re-create a unique atmosphere."

For Kevin Bowring, a Welsh coach under a shed-load of pressure, that atmosphere will count for an awful lot. "I know our people will bring their usual passionate support across the bridge with them," he said. "It's of enormous credit to

them that they have made this a sell-out occasion so far from home, even though we let them down so badly at Twickenham."

"We've talked about the humiliation and embarrassment of the England match amongst ourselves and discussed the things we feel we owe the people who are making the trip to-

morrow and showing such faith in us. Against New Zealand, they drowned out the haka with a wave of noise and they'll be at it again this time, I'm sure. What we need to do is give them something to sing about."

As usual, the most vibrant enthusiastic Welshman on view yesterday was Kingsley Jones, the Ebbw Vale captain not only recalled to his country's back row but also banded the leadership of the pack. "I always thought I'd get to play here, but as a footballer rather than a rugby player," he smiled. "A number of big clubs were after me at one time, you know."

Really? And who might they have been? "Well, Blaina Westside for one." And Jones creased up at the sight of a dozen reporters sheepishly closing their notebooks in the knowledge that they had been stitched up like the proverbial kipper. If Jones is still smiling tomorrow evening, Wembley will have done their tenants a favour.

FROM CRYSTAL PALACE TO THE MCG - FIVE VENUES AT ODDS WITH RUGBY'S MORE FAMILIAR HAUNTS

Crystal Palace, London, 1905
England 0 New Zealand 15

TWICKENHAM was still a twinkle in some Edwardian architect's eye - it would not open until 1909 - so England played their first international against the All Blacks at Crystal Palace. During the previous 30-odd years, they had performed at Blackheath, The Oval, Manchester, Richmond, Leeds, Birkenshead and, er, Dewsbury, but the tourists were special and the Palace was considered sufficiently palatial to host the occasion. Dave Gallaher's 'Originals' won at a canter, Dick McGregor scoring four of their five tries from full-back.

Hampden Park, Glasgow, 1906
Scotland 6 South Africa 0

THE Springboks had won 15 games on the bounce when they arrived at Hampden for their first Test on British soil. Until that point, the Scots had played almost all their rugby in Edinburgh - at Raeburn Place, Inverleith or Powderhall - but the Glasgow sporting fever inspired them, despite torrential rain and a sodden surface. Kenneth McLeod dominated proceedings with his kicking and it was entirely appropriate that he should score one of his sides two tries. The Boks would not lose another Test here for 59 years.

White City, London, 1908
Australia 32 United Kingdom 3

AN odd one, this. England's county champions, Cornwall, were invited to represent king and country at the 1908 Olympics (Sir John Hall may blench at the thought, but rugby was then an amateur game). As it turned out, they would have done better to stick to their pasties and tin mining. The Walesables slaughtered them at London's equivalent of the Olympic stadium, scoring eight tries of such quality that David Carruss would have cried tears of joy. Much to Cornish relief, the sport was dropped after the 1924 Games.

Prince of Wales Club, Santiago 1980
South 16 South Africa 30

THE Prince of Wales Club where? That's right, Santiago. As in capital of Chile, that revered rugby hotbed. Outraged by the entire civilised world outside New Zealand, the British Isles' Boks went travelling in search of some rugby and pitched up on the continent of Pele, Tostao and Che Guevara. They played their first Test against Hugo Porta's select XV in Montevideo, for heaven's sake, and then cut across country for the second match at a hastily refurbished sporting club. Only 3,000 turned up.

MCG, Melbourne, 1997
Australia 18 New Zealand 33

F ever rugby caught the imagination of a new audience, it was at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Last year, more than 90,000 spectators created what John Hart, the All Black coach, described as a "super-charged, mind-blowing atmosphere on an epic scale", and it was a mark of the visitors' greatness that they should effectively silence such a crowd with two tries in as many minutes from Bunce and Wilson. The Walesables were so depressed that they sloped off without waiting for their conquerors to lift the Bledisloe Cup.

Ferguson's flock could be pick of non-vintage bunch

By Glenn Moore
Football Correspondent

WEDNESDAY evening's full hand of drawn games in the European Cup quarter-finals confirmed the suspicion that there is no outstanding team in this year's competition. After three impressive victories, Milan '94, Ajax '95 and Juventus '96, the '98 champions, will, like Borussia Dortmund last year, be an ordinary Cru blessed with good fortune and the ability to rise to the occasion.

Manchester United - who

could develop into a vintage team but are not quite there yet - thus have as good a chance as any of the surviving octet of success, better, indeed, than most following their patient goalless draw in Monaco.

First they have to complete the job in the second leg. Jean Tigana, the Monaco coach, suggested the odds were now 50-50, a revision of his pre-match assessment that United were favourites by 55 to 45 per cent. One might have thought that nearly three years in Europe's casino capital would

have given him a better appreciation of odds. According to statistics assembled over the last 17 years of European competition, 70 per cent of teams gaining a goalless draw away from home in the opening leg go on to win the round.

Not that United, Dortmund, Real Madrid and Dynamo Kiev (the latter two, having drawn 1-1, are even more favoured) can start preparing for the April semi-finals yet. Tigana based his assessment on Monaco's away record - they will have David Trezeguet back for the second

leg - and they are strong on the counter-attack. It was their fear of United's similar strength which led them to be, to quote *L'Equipe*, "timid and cautious" on Wednesday. For most of the match the wide men, Willy Sagnol and Philippe Leonard, were more concerned with marking David Beckham and Nicky Butt than getting forward.

With United ever more defensive away from home in Europe - the result of bitter experience - the match thus became a dull one with neither side willing to commit them-

selves to attack. At Old Trafford, noted Ali Benarbia, Monaco's disappointed and disappointing midfielder, both sides will have to play to win.

Although a Monagasque goal would be worth more than a Mancunian one, the onus will be on United, and they will be hoping against expectation that Ryan Giggs' hamstringing recovers in time for him to play. On Wednesday, Teddy Sheringham and Andy Cole were comfortably contained by the man-markers, Martin Djeter and Muhamed Konjic, and the

sweeper, Franck Dumas. Cole - a rumoured target for Atletico Madrid - has now scored twice in seven games, and United will hope he rediscovers his earlier form by 18 March.

The most impressive ingenuity, craft and cunning of the night was shown by United's 5,000 fans, most of whom got in with or without a ticket. Some just walked in while a substantial number did so with photocopies of tickets on which the perforated "watermark" had been forged with a pin.

The poor police organisation

did not augur well for the World Cup. There was no nutter ring for checking tickets and at one stage, when the sheer number of United supporters arriving shortly before kick-off threatened to overwhelm them, the police drew batons.

Elsewhere, there was more disturbing news, with Tuesday's violence at the Internationale v Schalke 04 Uefa Cup match, which left a German fan in danger of losing his sight, being followed by problems at Wednesday's Bayer Leverkusen v Real Madrid game.

Meanwhile, United and their fans head for Sheffield and tomorrow's Premiership match against Wednesday. Denis Irwin will not be making the trip and both David Beckham and Peter Schmeichel are doubtful. All are suffering from the effects of Monaco's poor pitch. With neither Arsenal nor Blackburn playing, the champions could go 12 points clear. By the time Monaco arrive at Old Trafford United may be fairly sure that, whatever the result, they will have another shot at the Champions' League next year.

Harkness denies racist slur

By Paul Walker

THE Liverpool defender Steve Harkness last night denied making racist remarks to the Aston Villa striker Stan Collymore during the Premiership fixture at Villa Park last Saturday.

Collymore claimed he was "hurt and angry" after the remarks from Harkness and that he had deliberately informed black players at Anfield about what was allegedly said.

However, Harkness said: "I vehemently deny the accusation that I made racist comments to Stan Collymore during or after the game at Aston Villa on Saturday."

"The particular background to this game may have meant that there was more going on on the pitch than is usual, but that does not extend to racial abuse of any kind."

Before Harkness spoke out, it was revealed that Brendan Batson has been called in as an arbitrator by Liverpool as they consider their response to the claims from Collymore. The Professional Footballers' Association assistant secretary travelled to Anfield yesterday to

take part in the inquiry launched by Liverpool in the wake of the allegations from their former striker.

Batson said he was "bewildered, upset and definitely determined" to destroy racism in football. He added: "Was it just two players arguing in the heat of the moment? I hope it was and not anything else. If we find one person was racist then this organisation will come down hard on them."

With the Football Association considering an independent inquiry of its own - regardless of whether Collymore makes an official complaint against Harkness - Liverpool's top officials were locked in meetings yesterday. The club promised to make a statement after top-level discussions at Anfield, that included the player, the manager, Roy Evans, and chief executive, Peter Robinson.

Evans said: "I don't intend to say anything about Stan's comments. It is in the hands of the club's top people now."

Collymore, who scored both goals in the 2-1 victory for Villa over his old club, has not

decided whether to make his complaints official - or let the incident blow over.

Collymore's agent, Paul Stretford, said: "I have been kept informed of what has been going on, but neither I or Stan will make any further comment at the moment."

The Villa manager, John Gregory, promised that the club would give Collymore their full backing should he decide to take the matter any further. "We will back him 100 per cent," Gregory said. "The club will be in total support of Stan. I'm disgusted, to be honest, that something like this has happened on a football pitch, because we have a number of coloured players and they are superb people."

"But, as a club, at present we're not going to take up anything further with the Football Association."

Gregory revealed that Collymore was furious after the game. He said: "Not only was he taking sick physically, he was also taking a lot of verbal abuse. It did affect him and it took him a long time to calm down after the match."

Roberts back in the fray at Chesham

Non-League notebook

By Rupert Metcalf

GRAHAM ROBERTS is back in business. The former Tottenham and England defender, who controversially lost his job as manager of Yeovil Town last month, is the new man in charge of the struggling Rye House League club Chesham United.

The Buckinghamshire side, one off the bottom of the Premier Division, relieved Steve Emmanuel of his managerial duties last weekend. He had only been at the helm since October, when he replaced Andy Thomas. Although Roberts will not take complete charge until Tuesday night - he is fulfilling a prior commitment in Malaysia - he has already signed two players from Yeovil: Graham Kemp and Steve Brown.

Colin Lippiatt, who was Roberts' coach at Yeovil, has been confirmed as the man in charge of first-team affairs at the GM Vauxhall Conference club - but as "head coach" rather

than manager. Lippiatt will remain a part-time employee of the Somerset side. "It's a fresh challenge. I've never been at the helm since I started in non-League in 1978," the former Working assistant manager said.

Lippiatt certainly needs to make his mark quickly. Yeovil, who entertain Morecambe tomorrow, have lost all four matches played since he replaced Roberts in a caretaker capacity. "The changes have been unsettling and we have to get back on track," he added.

Yeovil's chairman, John Fry, has said that not appointing a full-time replacement for Roberts will make more money available for player recruitment. Dave Piper, a 20-year-old right-back, has already arrived at Huish Park from Southampton, and more signings are expected soon.

Chesham Town have reinforced their quest for the Conference title by buying hard-up Hereford United's top scorer, Neil Grayson, for an undisclosed five-figure fee.

About turn for Spackman?

By Ian Rodgers

NIGEL SPACKMAN may be about to return to Sheffield United as manager - only a few days after quitting.

Spackman departed on Tuesday but, after the resignation of the chairman, Mike McDonald, yesterday and a restructuring of the club at boardroom level, which will see the chief executive, Charles Green, move away from football affairs, Spackman has emerged as a prime candidate for four contenders.

"There is a possibility that Nigel may be able to assist us in team management," Kevin McCabe, a Blades director, said. "Board members recognise with hindsight that maybe things could have been handled differently over the last week or so."

"We are in discussions at the moment with possible appointees for the position of team manager and that does include Nigel Spackman. We've been speaking to him from Tuesday onwards. There has not been a total breakdown of communication with him."

Another man linked with the Bramall Lane vacancy, Lou

Macari, wants to link up with Spackman in a managerial team. The former Celtic and Stoke manager is one of the four men on the shortlist.

If nothing is settled today, the coaches Steve Thompson and Russell Slade may stay in charge for tomorrow's FA Cup quarter-final at Coventry. The Scarborough manager, Mick Wadsworth, is also reported to be in contention.

The Southampton chairman, Rupert Lowe, has denied rumours suggesting Matthew Le Tissier is in joint Manchester United in a £2m deal. "It's total nonsense," he said. "There is nothing in this whatsoever."

The Southampton striker Kevin Davies will be out of action for another six weeks. He has suffered a setback in training following an ankle injury.

Everton, without the suspended Duncan Ferguson for the next two matches, have had an attempt to sign the West Bromwich Albion striker Bob Taylor on loan turned down by the Midlands side.

The European Union has asked the World Cup organisers in France to open up a special ticket line to overseas fans.

The existing telephone line was set up only to take ticket reservations from fans with an address in France.

The EU and the French Organising Committee held talks yesterday in the wake of EU charges that the France 98 ticket allocation discriminated against foreigners. England, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium have demanded a fairer share-out. The EU has accused the FOC of breaching its principles of free and fair competition.

The EU Commissioner, Karel van Miert, said the three months remaining were not sufficient for all the necessary changes in the ticket allocation, but he hoped organisers would try to do their best to make as many changes as possible.

This weekend French fans will have a chance to secure tickets for the two World Cup semi-final ties for a fraction of the normal price - and from an unusual source. *Française de Jeux*, France's national lottery company, has said that lottery players will have the chance to win 20 semi-final tickets.

RFU to offer Dallaglio world-record £1m

Rugby Union
By Chris Hewett

The Rugby Football Union is preparing to escalate its increasingly bitter conflict with the owners of the England's professional clubs by offering Lawrence Dallaglio, the national captain, a five-year contract worth £1m. The deal would make the 25-year-old flanker the highest-paid player in the world game and, for a while at least, the most controversial.

Dallaglio is being placed under enormous pressure to be-

come the first big-name England player owned lock, stock and barrel by the union rather than a Premiership club. His current deal with Wasps, the reigning national champions, expires at the end of the season and with Fran Cotton and the rest of the RFU hierarchy desperate to break the clubs' contractual stranglehold on the country's leading talent, his impending freedom makes him an obvious target.

Rugby has thrown up the odd millionaire before - David Campese and Will Carling spent much of their mutually antago-

nistic careers bracketed together as the game's first seven-figure high-rollers - but the sheer value of the deal being dangled before Dallaglio will make the southern hemisphere big guns green with envy. The All Blacks, for example, earn around £100,000 a year from the New Zealand RFU.

However, Dallaglio is both fiercely loyal to Wasps and acutely aware that the Premiership clubs would react violently towards any agreement along the lines favoured by the union. Sir John Hall, the hard-line owner of Newcastle, has

repeatedly stated that he would not allow an RFU-contracted player within a mile of his Kingston Park premises and he is far from alone in his determination to maintain the contractual status quo. The RFU move therefore throws up the bizarre possibility of a club-less Dallaglio spending countless weeks in a kind of Premiership limbo.

Primacy of contract - or, in simpler language, who owns who - is at the root of the crisis over this summer's England tour of Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. The Northampton

owner, Keith Barwell, announced on Monday that he would prevent his Test contingent, who include Paul Grayson and Tim Rodber, from travelling. On Wednesday, Clive Woodward, the England coach, held a private meeting with his squad at Bisham Abbey and warned them that they risked forfeiting their immediate Five Nations places unless they could reassure him as to their availability.

No RFU figure would comment on reports of a Woodward ultimatum, but Barwell was almost incandescent as he prepared for an emergency

meeting of club owners today. "It's put up or shut up time," he said. "Clive has dug himself into a hole, for the players told him at Bisham that if he forced them to choose between club and country, they would have to choose their clubs for contractual and common sense reasons."

"We want a little bit of professionalism and a little bit of common sense. We want a structure between the RFU and the clubs so we agree when the players are going to play and when they're going to rest. At the moment, the amateurs at the RFU - and I include Fran

and Clive in that - still have this arrogance about them. The players are under contract to the clubs. What Fran and Clive are doing is asking my players to act illegally and break their contracts."

Doug Ash, chief executive of English First Division Rugby, the clubs' pressure group, said that a letter had been sent to Woodward "condemning his apparent bullying of the England players into accepting his views without reasonable debate or discussion". Ash added: "The letter asks him to withdraw his ultimatum and points out that

failure to do so may lead to a hardening of attitudes amongst the clubs."

Richard Hill, the Saracens and England flanker, pulled off what might be seen as the tactical ruse of the season by ruling himself out of all further rugby for some time. Hill, who would have been in the front line of the battle over tour availability, needs surgery on a long-standing back condition and will go under the knife tomorrow.

"I realise I can no longer play to the best of my ability with the injury as it is," Hill said. "Something has to give."

Wales at Wembley, page 30

McAllister rues World Cup blow

Football
By Ken Gaunt

GARY McALLISTER yesterday relived the moment when he knew his World Cup dream was over.

The Coventry City midfielder and the captain of Scotland limped out of a reserve game against Notts County on Wednesday night with a recurrence of the knee problem that has kept him out of action for the last three months. He was "very upset" immediately after the incident, but yesterday was trying to be positive about his injury.

McAllister will visit a specialist on Monday and is expected to have an operation on his torn cruciate ligament on his right knee in the next seven days. He anticipates being out of action for eight months, which means he will miss the opening qualifiers in for the 2000 European Championship as well as the World Cup.

"I was aware when I had my cartilage operation eight weeks ago it would be a gamble to try to support the knee by building up the muscles," McAllister said. "I felt I had to go down that road, although I always knew it was a gamble. Getting fit and training all went well, but the acid test was always going to be the first competitive game."

"The fact that I broke down with no one near me shows the knee wasn't right and gave me a definite answer. I just turned and reached for a ball, and my right knee hunched under me."

McAllister damaged the cruciate ligament when he injured his cartilage in December, but had hoped to make it through

to France 98 without further surgery. Those hopes have now been dashed - and McAllister's season has come to a premature end. He will be 37 by the time the 2002 World Cup comes around in Japan and South Korea.

Scotland's manager, Craig Brown, and the players offered their sympathy and support after hearing the grim news about McAllister, who has been capped 56 times.

Brown said: "Of course it's a major disappointment for Scotland, but I think we should put the player first in this kind of situation."

"You have to think of what it means personally to him and he's naturally very upset. So am I and I know the rest of the people connected with the squad will be as well."

"We all know what going to the World Cup finals meant to Gary. He missed out in 1990, when he was on the bench, and was desperate to play in France."

"I'm just coming to terms with the situation myself and it's hard to take in. Everyone is aware how influential a player Gary is on the park."

"But what is sometimes understated is the way he's respected both on and off the park by the other players."

Brown will name his squad to face Denmark in a friendly on 25 March a week today and there is now a vacancy for the captaincy. The Aberdeen goalkeeper Jim Leighton, the Blackburn defender Colin Hendry and the Monaco midfielder John Collins would appear to be the main contenders. Brown said: "I'll make a decision about that a little bit later."

United verdict, page 30

Independent's David Ashdown is Sports Photographer of the Year



Christopher Shaw (top) competing in the men's 200m breaststroke at the British Grand Prix in Leeds.

(Photograph taken with a NikonF5 at 500th of a second on a 300mm lens at F2.8 on Kodak multi-speed film) Chelsea (left) defend a free-kick taken by Middlesbrough's Juninho at the FA Cup final. (Photograph taken with a NikonF5 at 320th of a second on an 800mm lens at F16 on Kodak multi-speed film) Ben Tane (above) scores Australia's second try against England at Twickenham. (Photograph taken with a NikonF5 at 500th of a second with a 300mm lens at F2.8 on Fuji 800 ASA film pushed to 1600 ASA)

DAVID ASHDOWN, the Chief Sports Photographer of *The Independent* and *The Independent on Sunday*, has been named Sports Photographer of the Year.

The award was announced last night at the British Press Awards dinner at Lancaster Gate in London.

Ashdown, who has been with *The Independent* since the newspaper's launch in 1986, has

won many national and international photography prizes, including the prestigious International Olympic Committee's worldwide "Best of Sport" award.

Ashdown's winning portfolio in the Canon Sports Photographer of the Year category at last night's awards, which were sponsored by the Post Office, comprised these three photographs:

Stewart stands by status quo

Cricket

By Mark Baldwin
in Bridgetown, Barbados

ALEC STEWART does not expect to be handed the wicket-keeper's gloves for the fifth Test against the West Indies in Barbados next week.

The England opener gave a clear indication yesterday of his thinking for the match. In the past England have often reacted to times of crisis by using Stewart's all-round capabilities as a means of putting an extra bowler or batsman in the line-up.

However, Stewart believes a return to three seamers and one spinner is more likely after the defeat in Guyana, which has left England 2-1 down with two Tests to play. He said: "I would do it, as always, if I was asked,

but I would be surprised if we change the wicket-keeper now. I'm not on the selection committee, but no-one has spoken to me about keeping. If that's the way they want to go, then fine, but I don't think it will be."

Stewart feels the main requirement for the Barbados Test is getting England's batting firing as a unit. "I know it might sound a bit strange, because scores have been generally low and we've struggled to get going, but I don't think that any of our batsmen are out of form," he said. "Mike Atherton, for instance, is moving well at the crease and you can say the same for Nasser Hussain and Graham Thorpe. It's never been straightforward making runs against the West Indies, but the pitches and a high-seam ball have made it very difficult for us."

Warne will soon be full of beans

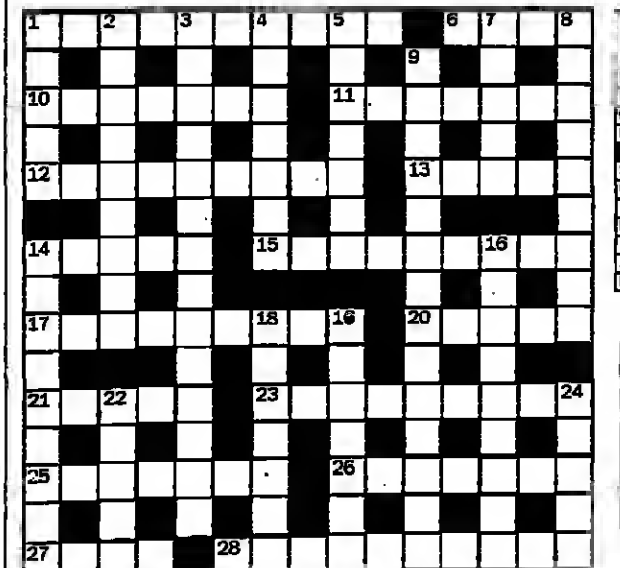
SHANE WARNE has demanding culinary tastes and his hosts on Australia's tour of India have had to admit defeat. The leg-spinner has an aversion to spicy food and an Indian inability to cater to his particular needs took the wind out of his sails as he prepared for the first Test, which starts in Chennai today.

The bowler, who was none too pleased earlier this year when several cracks were made about his corpulence, has lost pounds already on the tour, but his *cri de coeur* has been answered. An emergency shipment of his two favourites among the 57 varieties has been dispatched by the manufacturers.

Soon the spaghetti or beans on toast he craves will be his for the asking.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3551, Friday 6 March By Phil



- ACROSS
- Figures in geometry textbook that reader sorted out (10)
 - Line attached to this current could produce lights (4)
 - Sort out the grit (7)
 - Former Queen working with mother (7)
 - Start to bring water in two forms: That's a good idea (9)
 - You must get out for this! (5)
 - See first half of series as dud (5)
 - Stolen drug - NATO's leader removed - controversial affair (3,6)
 - Money not allowed for auditioning these musicians? (5,4)

- Reduction in service is an irritation (5)
- Drive that is consuming parliamentarian (Liberal) (5)
- Means of transporting germs seen to work (9)
- A solitary type found around front of monastery? (7)
- Notice reduced functions for partners (7)
- Nonsense, mate (4)
- Carthorse called Des galloping round end of valley (10)
- DOWN
- Nick is encountered after most of the boat (5)
- The main thing separating Australia and New Zealand? (6,3)
- Tired women relaxing, taking in a bit of lovely contact sport (3-2,9)
- What about the old girl with trim short hair? (7)

Thursday's solution

